MUSIC CONNECTION

SPECIAL YEAR END ISSUE!

HOT 100 LIVE
Unsigned Artists & Bands

OUR FAVORITE Signing Stories

TOP 25
New Music Critiques

50 BEST CAREER
Tips of 2023

Jenny Lewis

Gifts Under a Grand!

+ Offset ▪ Cannons ▪ Harman's Frank Joseph

Vol. 47• December 2023 • $3.95/$4.95 Canada

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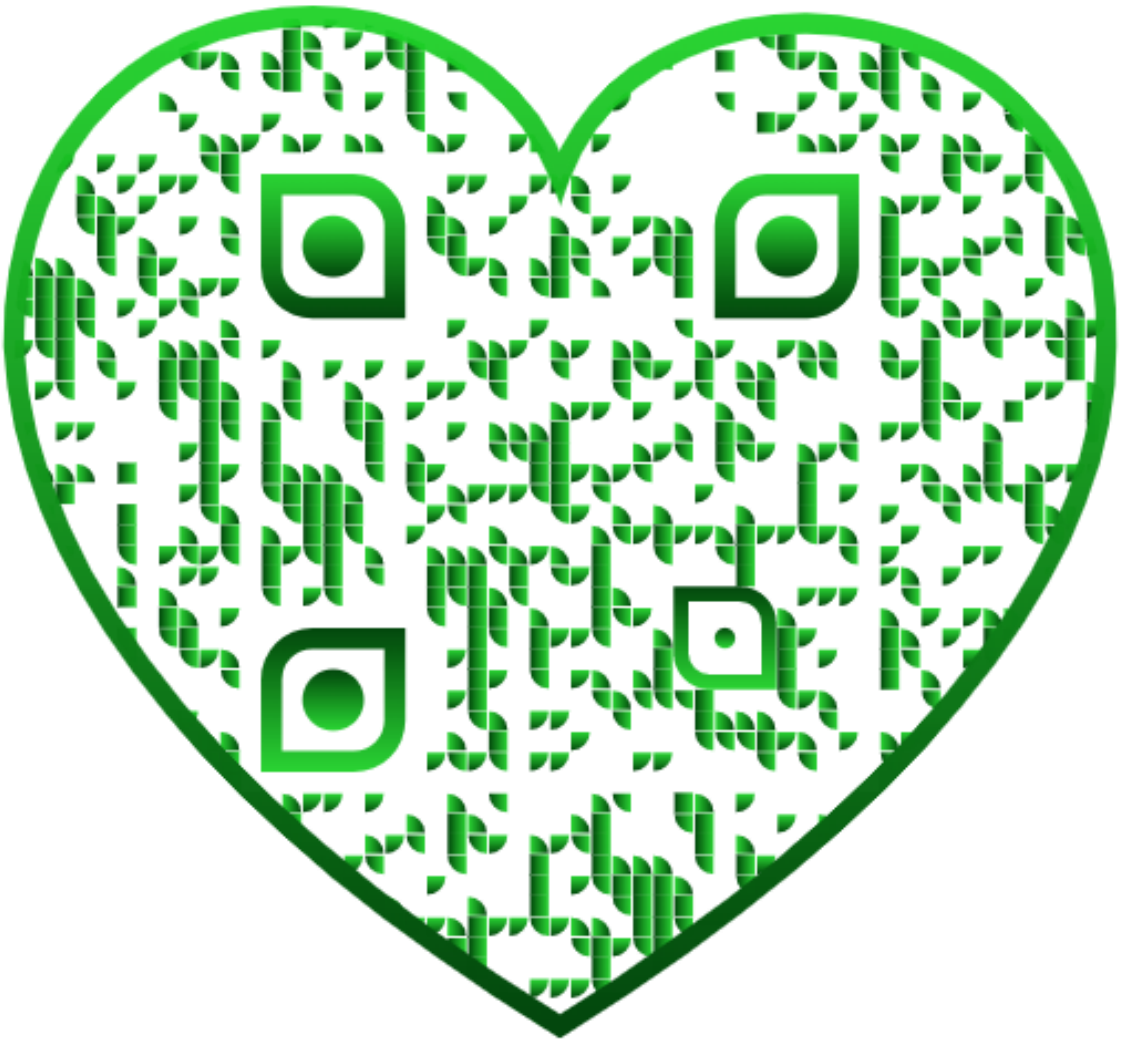

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Headlining coast-to-coast shows with her Joy'All Ball, joining the Beck and Phoenix Summer Odyssey tour, and in performances from Madison Square Garden to The Hollywood Bowl as a member of The Postal Service on their historic 20th anniversary tour with Death Cab for Cutie: With the release of her fifth solo record, *Joy'All,* Jenny Lewis is undeniably high profile.

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Photos by: Bobbi Rich

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WITH A LEGACY FOR AUDIO EXCELLENCE THAT SPANS 75 YEARS, AKG products have captured the essence of the world's most iconic artists, influencers and podcasters. From our legendary C414 condenser microphone, born in 1971 and a staple in top studios everywhere, to modern-classic headphones like the award-wining K371 and the budget-friendly K240, we provide the tools to take your project or performance to the next level. Create your own legacy with AKG.

75 AKG YEARS

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Sound Sleuth LLC

jlielectronics.com/diy-microphone-kits

Bewitched Microphone Kits: Reflective of the sonic magic they're designed to capture, the growing line of microphone kits created by veteran audio designer Jules Ryckebusch of Sound Sleuth LLC (in association with JLI Electronics) features items named after female characters from the classic sitcom *Bewitched*—Samantha, Endora and Serena, with Tabitha on the way. Ryckebusch began developing the products with JLI capsules, and when he came up with the circuitry, he reached out to JLI Operations Manager Brad Confer to see if his company could build and market them. The greatest challenge was sourcing the microphone bodies—but Confer was able to source them from his established vendors.

Background: Ryckebusch has an extensive background in analog design for audio, building compressors, mic preamps, EQs, etc. and always aiming for "clean and pristine." He started building mics eight years ago with kits from Microphone Parts. He started replicating the classic FET Schoeps circuit with a few minor improvements. Working through issues with parts obsolescence (most of the through hole components were 40 years old), he found a FET input opamp that could provide a high input impedance and had low distortion and low quiescent current—meaning it runs on Phantom power. With the Bewitched line, the PCBs are fully assembled and tested. To build their mic, users simply need to solder 5-9 wires, assemble a few items with small screws.

Samantha, Serena, Endora: The starting point into OPA based Sound Sleuth microphones, Samantha uses a 26mm electret condenser capsule reminiscent of the CAD E 100 mic that's been a go to for voiceover artists. Its design goal was low noise, low distortion, high bandwidth and a lot of headroom—which led to a Texas Instruments operational amp. Its audio quality is perfect for voiceovers and podcasters. Serena builds upon Samantha and takes it to the next level, using the same OPA circuit but replacing the capsule with a TSC-1, a full 34mm K67 style (Center Terminated) cardioid capsule. It's ideal for choirs and orchestras. Endora is like having two Serenas in one microphone, using a dual diaphragm capsule. Each side of the capsule is a mic that faces the opposite direction. While all multi-pattern microphones do this, each side of Endora is brought out separately, which allows users to create the pattern they want after recording via DAW or audio software.

Jules Ryckebusch: "What separates these Bewitched products from anything similar on the market is the simplicity of the kit. The circuit board has modern components and straightforward state-of-the-art pre-built circuit board. These are mics you build yourself that are on par with expensive Neumanns. My philosophy is, if you capture everything pristinely the first time, you can add anything in post to make it sound the way you like. These mics don't sound vintage or colored, they just sound good."

Contact Sound Sleuth 214-399-0931

Peter Karafotas

Senior Vice President
SoundExchange

SoundExchange announced the appointment of **Peter Karafotas** as **Senior Vice President of Government Relations & Public Policy**. Karafotas' career on Capitol Hill includes the roles of Communications Director, Deputy Chief of Staff, and Legislative Director roles and the Vice President of Operations for the consulting firm Adelstein | Liston. Karafotas will lead the development of a proactive public policy strategy to help SoundExchange fulfill its mission of protecting creators and the value of music. For more, contact SpinLab Communications jv@spinlab.net.

Graham Helser

Business Manager
Leftbrain

Founder and CEO of **Leftbrain**, Nicholas Judd, announced the promotion of **Graham Helser** to the position of **Business Manager** for the Los Angeles based company. In his new position, Helser will oversee a team of highly talented professionals as they collectively provide industry-leading business management services to some of the most accomplished acts in the music industry with a roster that ranges from rapidly growing indie artists to major-label, award-winning and chart-topping superstars. For more information, contact deborah@drpr.us.

Whitney Dublin

Senior Director, Digital Marketing
Mom+Pop Music

Mom+Pop Music announced the promotion of **Whitney Dublin** to **Senior Director, Digital Marketing**. During her tenure at Mom+Pop, Dublin has spearheaded digital marketing campaigns for artists such as FKJ, Del Water Gap, Orion Sun, Raffaella, and more, building a solid reputation for creating innovative and hard-hitting campaigns. In her new role as Senior Director, Digital Marketing, Dublin will spend her time liaising with editorial, marketing and experiential teams in developing campaign initiatives to maximize Mom+Pop's artists' visibility across digital properties. For further info, contact johnny@e2pr.biz.

Alex Oana

Global Sales Manager
Apogee Electronics

Apogee Electronics has announced the appointment of **Alex Oana** as **Global Sales Manager.** Oana brings over 35 years of diverse experience and expertise to Apogee. His journey has included roles as an award-winning recording engineer/producer, FOH mixer for Pharrell Williams and N*E*R*D, salesperson for Vintage King Audio, and Vice President of Slate. The sales role is about providing service to Apogee's distribution and dealer partners who enable them to continually expand their global customers. For media inquiries, contact alexo@apogeedigital.com.

Brianne Deslippe

SVP of Global Marketing & Strategy
Big Loud Records

Big Loud Records announced the addition of offices and label managers in London, U.K. and Brisbane, Australia, and bolsters its already established base in Toronto, Canada. "There is so much growth potential in these markets, I feel like we've just scratched the surface," Deslippe says. New recruits **Cayleigh Shepherd, Johnno Keetels** and **Justin Clark** will report to 2x CCMA Industry Person of the Year and SVP, Global Marketing & Strategy, Brianne Deslippe. For further information, contact Jess Anderson at jess@bigloud.com.

Erik Pettie

SVP/Head of Artist Services and Partnerships
Mtheory

Mtheory announced the hiring of **Erik Pettie** as **SVP and Head of Artist Services and Partnerships.** Pettie brings over 15 years of experience in the music and entertainment business to the company, and will work to build out the new Artist Services division, which is designed to help artists and labels gain exposure and generate revenue, while providing necessary tools and resources for success in the highly competitive music industry. For more, contact carla@sacksco.com.

Carletta Higginson

EVP, Chief Digital Officer
Warner Music Group

Warner Music Group announced that **Carletta Higginson** has joined the company as E**xecutive Vice President, Chief Digital Officer**. An accomplished media executive and music rights expert, Higginson joins WMG after a decade at Google, where she worked in business development and legal roles, across both music publishing and recorded music, most recently as Global Head of Music Publishing at YouTube and Google Play. Higginson previously worked as a litigator advocating for record labels, music publishers, artists, and songwriters. For more info, contact summer.wilkie@wmg.com.

Shannon Atran

Director, Public Relations
The Chamber Group

Shannon Atran has been promoted to **Director, Public Relations** at **The Chamber Group**, announced by Chris Chambers, principal/founder at The Chamber Group (TCG). In her new post, Atran will serve as the exclusive independent public relations executive for a broad array of TCG's music clients, including Lil Wayne, Pusha T, Big Sean, Mass Appeal, Lil Tay and others. Atran will be responsible for developing, executing, and overseeing PR campaigns on behalf of these artists. For more info, contact lydia@thechambergroup.com.

◄ AUDEZE FILTER

Audeze, the maker of very fine headphones, now has the Audeze Filter. Filter is an unusual name for a very unusual new and modern device; it is the company's first non-headphone product. Filter combines many new technologies into a lightweight portable, battery-powered, Bluetooth-enabled speakerphone.

When folded flat the Audeze Filter measures 76mm W X 152mm tall and only 11mm thick—about the size, dimensions, weight, and "feel" of a regular smartphone. Filter's bifurcated design allows its touchscreen controller to lay flat on your desktop or table while Audeze's flat 70mm by 105mm planar magnetic speaker is aimed at the person(s) using it.

Also aimed with the speaker are the two microphones used for "beam forming" their pickup pattern; it's adjustable from Off (or omnidirectional) to 30, 90, or 180-degrees of pickup. This is adjustable via the touchscreen panel or the free app. I especially liked the way I could "audition" the pickup by recording and playing back a short (10 seconds) audio clip to try different patterns. Since Filter is a speakerphone, setting the width of pickup as narrow as required increases intelligibility for the person(s) on the line you're talking with. This becomes especially important in overly live-sounding offices spaces.

The beam forming technology combines with a Deep Neutral Network-based noise cancellation system "trained" with over 500,000 noise samples to reduce annoying background sounds effectively. I have been trying all three levels of noise cancellation—again using the record/audition/playback function for weeks now and it works!

Audeze's new Filter lightweight portable, battery-powered, Bluetooth-enabled speakerphone is a modern way to use a speakerphone. I don't use my iPhone without it. The Audeze Filter sells for $250 MSRP and comes with a deluxe carrying pouch and complete instructions and free app.

audeze.com/products/filter

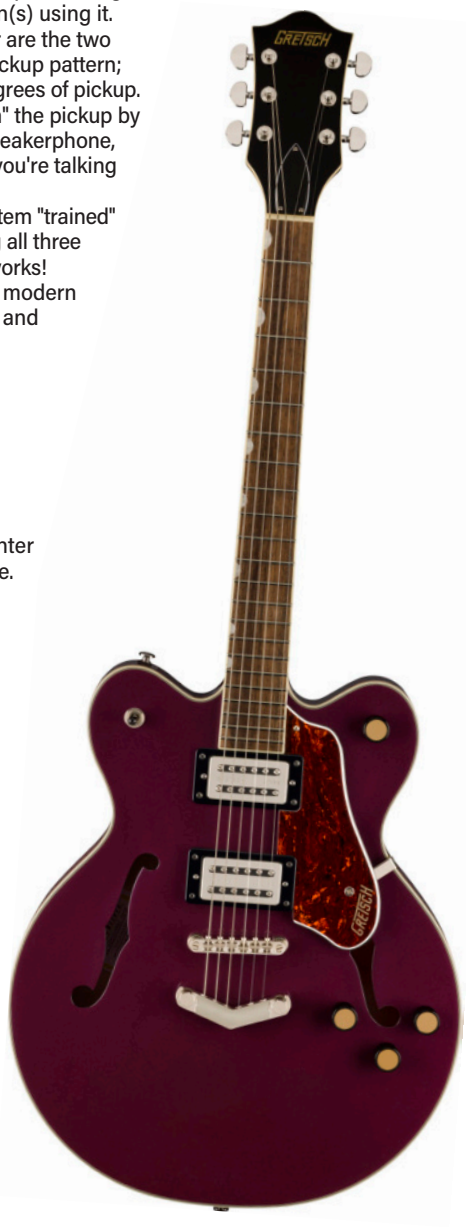
► FENDER/GRETSCH STREAMLINER™ COLLECTION

Vintage Gretsch styling from the '40s, '50 and '60s combined, with modern features plus center blocks and hollow bodies, lets players explore new sounds and textures at an affordable price.

BT-3S pickups with coil splitting have a stronger mid-range plus a full low-end and the characteristic Gretsch definition. The revised chambered spruce center block offers a faster attack and acoustic clarity, while the soft C neck profile provides good feel and ease of playability. You also get a real bone nut for a warmer, natural tone and better tuning stability.

Built for versatile tones and spectacular style, the Gretsch Streamliner collection ranges in price from $500 and up, depending on whether they have a Bigsby and/or V-Stoptail.

gretschguitars.com



▼ PSP AUDIOWARE PSP BINAMP

BinAmp is a plug-in that sounds like the '60s' Italian–made Binson Echorec 2—the pre-amplifier section only. The Binson Echorec 2 used triode tubes running in class-A and was popular with jazz guitarists and some rock bands for its warm and darker sound.

The PSP BinAmp comes with 92 saturated and colorful starting presets divided into six groups named after their targeted application. There are: Soft Sat, High Drive, Drums, Instrument, Vocals, and Miscellaneous. Presets are also listed by a good collection of internationally known sound designers. Once you modify a preset, you can save it in your own collection.

The BinAmp GUI mimics the Binson EchoRec complete with the original hardware's green Magic Eye "vacuum tube" that indicates the amount of saturation. I like that all the controls have mouse-over pop-ups describing what each controls does and makes assessing any parameter change easier. The main controls are: Character for setting the amount of saturation and the clever Drive control adds gain on the input signal while, at the same time, reduces the output level. The High Pass Filter or HPF ranges up to 250Hz and there is the Level control for setting the final output level with +/-20dB of gain available.

There are trims pots for a high-frequency roll-off, Wet/Dry/Blender and Variation adjusts slight differences between multiple instances of BinAmp in the same DAW session. I may want more 'color' on drums and bass and less on keyboards and vocals.

Simple to use and wonderful to hear, PSP BinAmp gives your tracks a little (or a lot) of that rich Binson tone. PSP BinAmp is available from the PSP Audioware website for $99 MSRP.

pspaudioware.com

Surprising Specs Unsurprising Price

The newest generation of Scarlett has arrived, but what are the pros saying about it?

"I would not hesitate at all to use these preamps on a master recording!"

Rob Burrell
Mix Engineer
(Four-time Grammy winner)

"This interface is an absolute game changer"

Joseph Chudyk
Mix Engineer
(Kane Brown, Ghost, The Band CAMINO)

"The new Air mode makes everything sound more expensive. This is my new go-to interface when I'm on the road"

Josh Gannet
Recording & Mix Engineer
(Wu-Tang Clan, Redman, Steve Miller, Keith Richards)

"I see no reason why anyone wanting to get into engineering would buy a different interface than this!"

Brandon Towles
Mix Engineer
(Keke Palmer, Dierks Bentley, Parker McCollum)

Scan the QR code to discover Scarlett 4th Gen and hear what these pros are talking about.

Focusrite® | Scarlett

◄ DENON DJ PRIME4+

The PRIME 4+ is the first, four-deck standalone DJ controller to feature stem separation technology without using an attendant computer. DJs can isolate vocals or instruments with the tap of a finger. The PRIME4+ has access to tracks from Amazon Music Unlimited, Tidal, Beatsource and more. There is on-board song analysis, a built-in sampler, DMX and Smart Lighting for controlling the lights and over 25 new and/or updated effects with OLED displays to keep up with working DJs.

Called the world's most powerful standalone DJ system, Prime4+ has a new refined look, unrivaled streaming music accessibility, 10 percent larger jog wheel surface, and has the latest Engine DJ 3.1 update including its all-new Touch FX and new Main FX offerings.

The Denon DJ Prime4+ sells in the U.S. for $2,199 MSRP.

denondj.com/prime-4-prime4xus

► AGUILAR AMPLIFICATION INSTRUMENT & SPEAKER CABLES

Aguilar Amplification just came out with a new line of both 1/4-inch instrument cables and amp/speaker cabinet interconnects that both use Neutrik connectors and the finest cable stock. These cables were designed by and for bassists; you get solid and durable road-worthy cables "you could use to tow a car with," yet they have a superior, transparent sound!

I received two speaker/amp cables, a three-foot and a six-footer. First of all, the custom Neutrik Speakon connectors have crush-proof metal covers (my regular ones do not) and the cable stock is covered in braided polyester wrap similar to the stuff used for bullet proof vests.

The 3-foot cable is perfect for connecting a speaker cabinet with the amp head sitting directly on top of it. I found the six-foot cable reached perfectly for using an alternate cabinet sitting nearby. Andy Fuchs' Clean Machine II 50-watt amp top sounded great through these cables for either cabinet—all I had to do is keep both Aguilar cables connected to the cabinets and their amp-end connectors available. Switching cabinets is quick and there are no exposed connectors that can short out.

The instrument cables come in 10- and 20-foot versions with either a right-angled to straight plug at each end or straight plugs at both ends.

I like using a right-angled plug at the amp input jack and a straight plug into my Stratocaster guitar, while others might like the other way around such as when playing a Les Paul where a right-angle plug does not stick out any further than necessary and the cable can loop through the end pin and strap. The Aguilar Instrument & Speaker cables are now available at select retailers with prices to be announced.

aguilaramp.com

◄ POSITIVE GRID SPARK CAB

Positive Grid has the 140-watt Spark CAB powered guitar amp speaker cabinet that works with all Spark series practice amps—actually any amplifier head or pre-amp with a line-level output.

Spark CAB uses a Class-D power amp circuit that delivers a clear sound by amplifying the intricate nuances of all the guitar tones produced by your guitar and pre-amp/head. You'll have ample power and headroom for an authentic feel with a big sound.

Rear panel connections and controls include a 3.5mm stereo input jack to connect any Spark guitar amps with a Spark 40/MINI/GO cable included and there are also two Combo XLR/TRS inputs, a balanced XLR output, a Contour (loudness) switch will equalize low and high frequencies for a more balanced sound at low volumes and also a Ground lift switch.

The Positive Grid Spark Grid Cab has a 10-inch woofer and 2 high-frequency dome tweeters with a 45Hz to 20kHz response and there is an onboard 19-volt/2.5amp DC power supply output connector, plus an USB-C jack for connecting a Spark series amp or powering/charging a tablet or phone.

The Spark CAB will be available to pre-order soon and measures 19H X 16W x 10D inches and weighs 30lbs.

positivegrid.com/products/spark-cab

BARRY RUDOLPH is a recording engineer/mixer who has worked on over 30 gold and platinum records. He has recorded and/or mixed Lynyrd Skynyrd, Hall & Oates, Pat Benatar, Rod Stewart, the Corrs and more. Barry has his own futuristic music mixing facility in North Hollywood called Tones 4 $ Studios. He is a lifetime Grammy-voting member of NARAS and a contributing editor for *Mix Magazine*. barryrudolph.com

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STOCKING STUFFERS - 2023

BY ROB PUTNAM

Stock, Stock Stocking on Heaven's Door

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the house, you'd done no shopping and felt like a louse. That's how things played out last year. But this year you promised that you wouldn't surrender to apathy's magnetic melody; that you wouldn't find yourself at Target five minutes before closing with zero ideas and perhaps even fewer dollars; that you wouldn't dox your mail carrier (again) because a package ordered 20 minutes earlier hasn't yet arrived. But procrastination's justification lurks around every corner. *Music Connection* knows this and our stocking stuffers feature* has your back. For 2023, such Noel nonsense will be The Ghost of Christmas Past's problem.

** Pulitzer Prize nomination forms available upon request.*

ERNIE BALL EAGLE FLEECE HOODIE

$49.99

Ernie Ball has been a go-to guitar string supplier for decades. All new for this year, though, is their Eagle Fleece Hoodie. Like the Beatles on *The*

Ed Sullivan Show, they're available only in black and white. The Ernie Ball eagle logo on the chest shines like a beacon to other guitarists and the hoodie comes with enough pocket space to stash strings, an Ernie, a Ball and perhaps even an eagle. ***shop.ernieball.com/merch-store.html***

MUSIC LOLLIPOPS

$14.99 (two dozen)

No one likes to be a sucker. But virtually everyone likes to eat one. Moreover, there are few occasions when candy isn't a welcome addition to any event. Next to Halloween, the winter holidays are the best thing to happen to candy since Willy Wonka. It's debatable if eating one of these counts as practice, though. But more outrageous claims have been made in the past and surely will be made in the future. Perhaps even in this column. ***tinyurl.com/cwpk6n2h***

PLUGINZ FENDER JACK RACK KEYCHAIN

$34.99

Keys are important: both in everyday life and in music theory. This keychain can help you keep track of one kind. Guess which.

While it's designed to hold physical keys, it seems reasonable that seeing what resembles a tiny Fender amp daily could serve as a reminder, potentially, of the importance of the theoretical keys. Whatever the case, it makes it less likely that you'll lose either of them. ***tinyurl.com/2bas2dpa***

STACKS OF CASH

Starting at around $7.99 for "$10,000"

Many musicians dream of stacks of cash in recognition of their many and varied contributions. Far fewer realize such levels of wealth health, of course. But you can make a golden impression and help support the dream with blocks of remarkably authentic-looking stage money: phony two-sided currency used in film and TV production. There are countless sources, including stage money outfits such as PropMoney.com and Buzzprops.com. Naturally, stacks are also available from Amazon and eBay. Prices are typically commensurate with quality, so shop around. But also, don't be a Scrooge. ***tinyurl.com/b7hn7fw5***

RISE8 STUDIOS DRUMSTICK UTENSIL SET

$16.99

Holiday gifts don't have to be practical. But it also doesn't hurt when they are. An audition didn't go as well as you'd hoped? Your bandmates kicked you out because you lost your keys (see the Pluginz Fender keychain listing above)? You simply don't like salad? Use this drumstick utensil set to pound-out your frustrations with a drumroll on a vessel of veggies. It's not like produce doesn't deserve it. ***tinyurl.com/272dyxwz***

IN THE GROOVE: THE VINYL RECORD AND TURNTABLE REVOLUTION

$40.00

Published in mid-October to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the first commercial LP, this book

looks at records from 78s to 45s and everything in between. Written by several in-the-know music folk (not to be confused with folk musicians), it also addresses the record-pressing process, turntables and other such record-related issues. Is a book on records the same as a record on books? #RhetoricalQuestion. ***shorturl.at/gjrD6***

COMIART BASS GUITAR COFFEE/TEA SPOONS

Starting at $7.99 (set of four)

Comiart bass guitar coffee/tea spoon sets are available in several colors, including black, blue, rainbow and gold. As with

the lollipops, nimble and nuanced argument would be required to qualify using these as practice. But it may ignite a caffeine-charged inspiration, which is at least a stir in the right direction. ***shorturl.at/diFHX***

MUSIC-THEMED HOLIDAY STOCKING

$9.99

Some may say that this music-themed, 18-inch holiday stocking is too on the nose. But since stockings are worn on the feet, this objection is overruled on the basis of frivolity. Now: to matters at hand. Or feet. What musician wouldn't enjoy waking up on Christmas morning to find this piece of haute holiday hosiery decking the halls? Most certainly would, but there's at least one who wouldn't. First name: The. Surname: Grinch. Do not attempt to approach or apprehend. ***shorturl.at/emnv3***

BLUETOOTH HEADPHONE BEANIE HAT

$15.99

This tech-loaded lid is both warm and cool. Additionally, there are no earbuds that can fall out, get tangled cables or, indeed, be ripped out at inconvenient times. Not that it's ever convenient. Or warm. Or cool. ***shorturl.at/dfHS4***

GUITAR CENTER LESSONS ACOUSTIC GUITAR CURRICULUM BOOK 1

$17.99

Everyone has a friend or family member who owns a guitar but doesn't know the first thing about how to play it. Every time they happen upon it, they renew the pledge to themselves that they'll learn how to jam "This year for sure!" You can enable such promises with this book as an excellent starting point for budding musicians. It's accompanied by online audio and is one of Guitar Center's top-selling items. ***tinyurl.com/3fkpshxm***

MINIATURE EDDIE VAN HALEN AND 1957 LES PAUL GOLDTOP GUITARS

$49.99 each

On Van Halen's 1982 record *Diver Down*, the band included the diminutive ditty "Little Guitars." As the name

suggests, it was played on a miniature Les Paul lookalike. It might be hard to pull off "Eruption" on this little guitar, but EVH was fond of saying "If you're not cheating, you're not trying hard enough." Also note that actual 1957 Les Paul Goldtops command five- or even six-figure prices these days. That's a conversion rate of 2,000 of these little guitars to one real one. Both are officially approved. ***tinyurl.com/29znkepu and tinyurl.com/35658t39***

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GIFTS UNDER A GRAND - 2023

▲ FENDER VINTERA II STRATOCASTER

For players who want the style and sound of Fender's golden era, choose the Vintera '50s Stratocaster. Equipped with the coveted features that defined the decade including period-accurate neck profile and hardware, along with re-voiced pickups, this guitar has all the chime and articulation that made the Stratocaster a legend. For authentic, vintage-style tone you get a trio of single-coil Stratocaster pickups to sound more like the originals. Crystalline and bell-like, these pickups deliver the crisp, articulate tone that puts Fender on the musical map. The updated "Soft V"-shaped neck has a 7.25"-radius maple fingerboard with 21 vintage-style frets for classic playing feel. A vintage-style, six-point synchronized tremolo and vintage-style tuning machines provide original-era aesthetics, rock-solid performance and tuning stability. Other features include vintage-style strap buttons, 5-way pickup switching and the traditional Strat control layout. Includes a deluxe gig bag.

$959.99

fender.com/en-US/electric-series/vintera-ii

► AUDIENT ID 24

Audient's ID 24 is a premium two-channel audio interface designed to deliver ultra-low noise and low distortion with a touch of classic analog warmth. ID24's two Audient Console mic preamps are the same as found in Audient's high-end recording consoles and deliver a clean, accurate and true to source translation of your audio. Class Leading AD/DA Converters let you hear every nuance and every aspect of your audio. 1 x ADAT Input & Output allows expandability. 2 x Fully Balanced Inserts let you integrate your favorite outboard FX prior to conversion and start creating signal chains that rival the very best. Assignable monitor control speeds up your workflow with three programmable function buttons.

$399.00

audient.com/id-audio-interface-range

▼ SONY MDR MV1 REFERENCE HEADPHONES

SONY's MDR MV1 Reference Headphones are professional-grade open-back studio Monitor headphones for creating spatial and stereo sound with wide frequency range and soundstage feel. Designed for mixing and monitoring in stereo, binaural, or spatial audio, SONY's MDR MV1 Reference Headphones are designed with comfort in mind. Featuring lightweight construction with padded headband and soft, breathable suede ear pads, SONY's MDR MV1 Reference Headphones are perfect for extended listening sessions. The earcups fold flat for easy storage.

$398.00

pro.sony/ue_US/products/headphones/mdr-mv1

▲ MACKIE DLZ CREATOR

Mackie's DLZ Creator is an adaptive digital mixer for podcasting and livestreaming designed around a 10.1-inch high-resolution touch screen. Mackie's DLZ Creator features four professional-quality microphone preamps borrowed from Mackie's Onyx series of professional mixers. You can have the Mackie DLZ Creator stream directly to your DAW or OBS via the available USB-C port. Mackie's DLZ Creator is super easy to get up and running and walks you through the entire process of configuring and setting up your input and gain levels. The Mackie DLZ Creator has three selectable user modes: Easy, Enhanced and Pro, which unlock progressively more sophisticated audio and routing features depending on the end user's level of experience.

$799.99

mackie.com/en/products/livestreaming-podcasting/dlz/dlz_creator.html

◀ APOGEE DUET 3 LIMITED EDITION

Apogee's DUET 3 limited edition set includes the latest version of Apogee's DUET two-channel audio interface, docking station as well as a full suite of software and plug-ins. Designed to deliver Apogee's award-winning digital audio conversion and crystal-clear sound, Apogee's DUET 3 audio interface set can be used as a desktop interface or used on the go. The re-designed breakout cable makes connecting instruments and microphones a breeze.

$699.00

apogeedigital.com/duet3-limited-edition

◀ UNIVERSAL AUDIO GALAXY '74 TAPE ECHO AND REVERB

Universal Audio's Galaxy '74 is designed to capture the authentic, iconic tones of a mid-70's Roland Space Echo upgraded with modern flexibility. Universal Audio Galaxy '74 Tape Echo and Reverb is built upon Universal Audio's award-winning UAFX dual-engine processor that allows you to create separate stereo instances of each reverb and delay for three-dimensional stereo effects. Get authentic tape textures and incorporate double delayed times to create rhythmic subdivisions not possible on the original hardware. The Galaxy '74 authentic 70's spring reverb even includes a dwell control.

$349.00

uaudio.com/guitar-pedals/galaxy-74-tape-echo-reverb.html

◀ NATIVE INSTRUMENTS TRAKTOR X1 MK3

The Native Instruments Traktor X1 MK3 is a compact, flexible, modular DJ controller built to integrate seamlessly with Native Instruments' flagship DJ app, Traktor Pro 3. Personalize your performances with the Traktor X1 MK3's expanded functionality for effects control, playback manipulation, looping, mixer mapping and more. With the Traktor X1 MK3, you're able to map each button and color-code them to identify specific functions in the heat of the moment. A built-in three-port USB hub means you can simply connect to your CD player or turntable, or daisy-chain more Traktor X1 MK3s for more advanced setups.

$299.00

native-instruments.com/en/products/traktor/dj-controllers/traktor-x1

▶ ALESIS NITRO MAX DRUM KIT

The Alesis Nitro Max is an eight-piece electronic drum kit featuring mesh heads and Bluetooth capability. The Alesis mesh drumheads deliver a highly accurate and response playing surface in any acoustic environment making them a perfect choice for home use. Nitro Max includes an amazing collection of drum and percussion sounds including classic and modern drum kits. Great for new or experienced drummers, the Alesis Nitro Max is designed to provide the tools you need as your skills advance.

$399.00

alesis.com/products/view2/nitro-max-kit

GIFTS UNDER A GRAND - 2023

▲ CASIO CDP-S360

Casio's CDP-S360 electronic keyboard delivers piano authenticity, a huge collection of Tones and Rhythms, and music production tools in a slim, unibody case that's barely larger than the keys themselves. Weighing only 24 lbs and capable of running on either its included power supply or six AA batteries, the CDP-S360 provides portability and convenience, and goes way beyond piano with 700 Tones, 200 Rhythms, six-track recording and more.

$899.99

casio.com/us/electronic-musical-instruments/product.CDP-S360BK

► AKG ARA USB MICROPHONE

The AKG Ara two-pattern USB microphone lets podcasters, YouTubers, gamers and musicians capture pro-quality, high-resolution audio right from their desktops. Whether you're streaming or recording, capture audio at 24-bit, 96kHz resolution for crystal-clear speech clarity and stunning vocal and instrument tracks. Ara's dual pickup patterns let you focus on a single voice or instrument or everyone in the room.

$105.00 (on sale for $49)

akg.com/Microphones/Condenser%20Microphones/AKG-C22-USB-LS.html

▲ FIX AUDIO DESIGNS THE BUCKET

The Bucket is an 8-channel 500 Series Rack with DSUB in and out, both paralleled for multing or linking. Each pair of channels has a standard LINK Jumper for linking compressors. The Bucket is made from steel, and comes with 8-channel rack, set of rack ears, steel handle, 18 knurled screws (for modules), Wolff Audio 2 AMP PSU, IEC power cable (international kits available). This is the same Bucket used in Fix Audio consoles and has an available XLR adapter unit to convert the DSUB outputs to XLR.

$499.00

fixaudiostore.com/products/the-bucket-500-series-portable-or-rack-mount-module-rack

◄ JBL EON ONE COMPACT

The JBL EON ONE Compact packs a professional speaker, a full-featured, 4-channel mixer and Bluetooth control into JBL's most compact battery-powered PA, weighing in at just 17.6 lbs (8kg). Sound your best in seconds with premium Lexicon and dbx-inspired effects and presets that you can customize right on your phone or tablet using the JBL Compact Connect app—no engineer needed.

$649.00 (on sale for $499)

jblpro.com/en-US/products/eon-one-compact

◀ THE CAD AUDIO GXLIEM

The CAD Audio GXLIEM In-Ear Wireless Monitoring System provides musicians with a cost-effective and easy-to-use monitoring solution, enhancing their performance during live shows. ScanLink technology scans 16 frequencies and selects the cleanest channel for clear audio up to 100 feet. The system includes CAD's MEB1 earbuds and rack mounting hardware.

$295.00

cadaudio.com/products/gxl-series/gxliem4

▶ AUDEZE MM 100

Designed in collaboration with multi-Grammy Award-winning mixing engineer Manny Marroquin, Audeze's MM100 professional headphones are designed to be comfortably worn for even the longest mixing sessions. The MM100 features Audeze's planar magnetic drivers that are fine tuned for production-grade accuracy. The headphones feature premium magnesium and steel construction. Audeze's high-efficiency drivers deliver studio quality sound anywhere your work takes you.

$399.99

audeze.com/products/mm-100

◀ PIGTRONIX COSMOSIS STEREO AMBIENT REVERB

The Pigtronix Cosmosis is a state-of-the-art ambient reverb effects pedal. Years in the making and the first of its kind, the Cosmosis allows musicians to manipulate the three provided stereo spaces—Theater, Temple and Cosmos—in real time. Controls to adjust the size of the reverb space, adjust the wet/dry blend, and filtering are provided. Use the morphing control to blend the reverb spaces to create elegant, subtle or over-the-top reverb effects.

$219.00

pigtronix.com/pedals/cosmosis

▶ TECH 21 SANSAMP CHARACTER PLUS FUZZY BRIT

Weighing in at just 12 ounces, the Fuzzy Brit is the latest addition to Sans-Amp's Character Plus series. Combining classic 70's style British amplification and a vintage fuzz effect, the Fuzzy Brit is both a fuzz pedal and stand program with a full EQ stack for endless tone shaping options. The Fuzzy Brit has two channels, each with its own drive control making it a perfect fly-rig sized platform for rhythm and lead work. Put the Fuzzy Brit on your pedalboard to take your amp tones from mild to wild or use it as a stand-alone preamp to power a studio mixer or PA. Road worthy build quality and legendary SansAmp preamp circuitry, not to mention a cost-effective price, should put the Fuzzy Brit on the short list for your next multi-effects pedal.

$279.00

tech21nyc.com/products/sansamp/characterplus

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STAY DOWN
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full album 2024

Fervor Records

Spotify · Apple Music · music · YouTube

BOOK STORE

Party Like A Rockstar

By J.T. Harding

(hardcover) **$28.00**

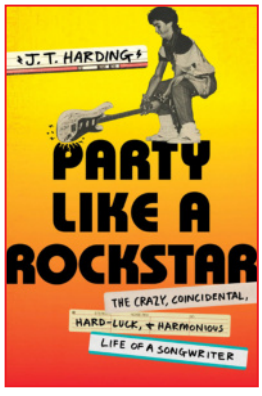


Chart-topping (and three-million-selling) songwriter J.T. Harding shoots from the hip in his briskly entertaining and informative book about his life and career. Songwriters looking for tips, tricks and insights about steering a songwriting career in today's music industry will get plenty out of reading Harding's new book.

Energy Follows Thought: The Stories Behind My Songs

By Willie Nelson, with David Ritz and Mickey Raphael

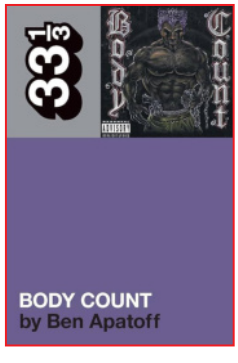
(hardcover) **$50.00**

Having celebrated his 90th birthday earlier this year, Willie Nelson shares the stories behind the lyrics of 160 of his favorite songs for the first time. From his earliest work in the 1950s to today, Nelson looks back at the songs that have defined his career, from his days of earning $50 each, to his biggest hits, from the deep cuts that are incredibly meaningful to him, to his concept albums.

Body Count (33 1/3)

By Ben Apatoff

(paperback) **$14.95**

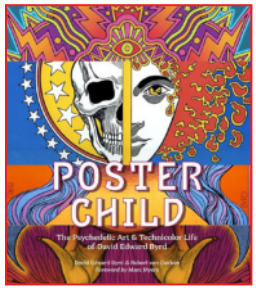


This is the first-ever book about Ice-T's all-Black hardcore band, Body Count, known as "the most incendiary band in the world" and one of the most important stories in music history. *Body Count (33 1/3)* is about a set of high school friends who shattered musical boundaries, brought explosive live performances and raised questions America's lawmakers didn't want to answer, overcoming some of the country's most powerful forces to reshape the world's cultural conversation.

Poster Child: The Psychedelic Art & Technicolor Life of David Edward Byrd

By David Edward Byrd & Robert von Goeben

(hardcover) **$45.00**



Here's a beautifully presented biography of the rock poster artist who created iconic posters for Bill Graham's Fillmore East and worked with Jimi Hendrix, Lou Reed, KISS, The Who, the Grateful Dead, movies and musical theater. Presented as an oral history, the interviews with the artist himself are continuously entertaining and enlightening.

Miles Davis And The Search For The Sound

By David Chisolm

(hardcover) **$39.99**

Expressive and atmospheric, this handsome hardcover is a cut above the usual graphic novel. Written and drawn by trumpet player, cartoonist, composer, and educator Dave Chisholm—and with narration adapted from Davis' own words and an innovative visual style that shifts to reflect the artist's constant musical changes—*Miles Davis and the Search for the Sound* deftly explores the often volatile journey of Miles Davis and his world-renowned music.

The Who & Quadrophenia

By Martin Popoff

(hardcover) **$50.00**

Here's a handsome, deep-dive examination of The Who's 1973 song cycle. As he's done previously (most recently with Alice Cooper, AC/DC, Pink Floyd) Popoff examines a multitude of angles: the writing process, the recording sessions, the gear, and much more, including rare memorabilia. Dedicated Who fans will relish and devour this meaty beaty book.

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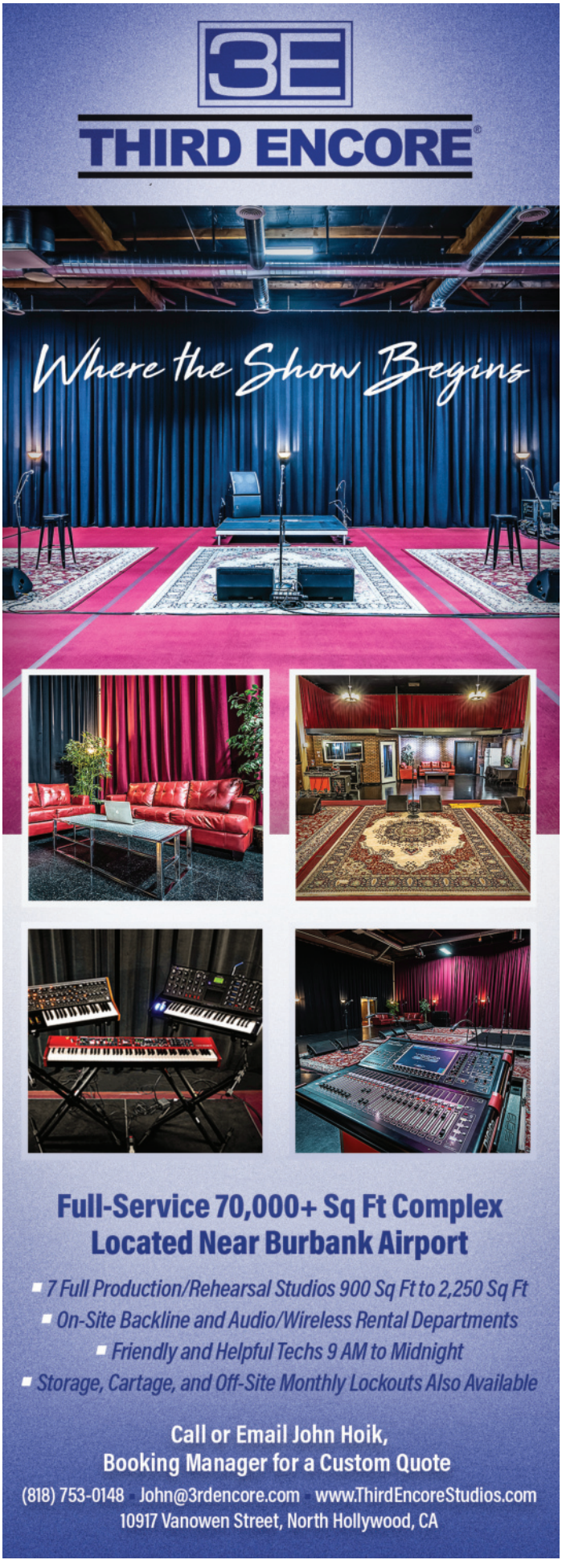

The Greene Room

greeneroom.com

From the Ground Up: There's a fascinating link on the Studio Tour website page of The Greene Room, a full-service state of the art studio launched by veteran engineer Marc Greene in 1999. It's a step-by-step photographic essay of how the structure was built from the ground up on an empty residential lot in Sherman Oaks, CA, followed by images of how the rooms inside were developed under the sonic design guidance of Steven Klein's Sound Control Room, considered one of Los Angeles' leading acoustic design and consultation firms. Greene built his own commercial space after years as a successful freelance engineer in the '80s and '90s, working on a diverse array of high profile and independent projects at top facilities like Wally Heider's in Hollywood, as well as at Cherokee, Devonshire, Enterprise, Evergreen and Capitol.

Diversity of Projects: Greene's goal at launch was to offer an auxiliary room for himself and fellow engineers to track small rock and pop projects – but The Greene Room has grown through the digital era to include film work (including overdubs and individual instruments on the 2022 animated film *Addams Family 2*), ADR (where actors replace dialogue), editing and mixing of choirs and orchestras and shooting videos. The studio also offers mixing and mastering in stereo and 5.1 Surround, full band and drum tracking, vocal recording, tuning and repair, recording of small string groups, location use for film, TV and video, Pro Tools instruction, audio restoration and noise reduction, voice overs, narrations, audio books and podcast recording.

The Studio Layout: "Because The Greene Room was literally built from the ground up rather than by converting an existing space, the electricity is correct, the floors are floating, the walls have the perfect soundproofing and the correct quiet flow of air conditioning. The ceilings are 12 feet high and the rooms (a 320 sq ft main recording room, 300 sq. ft. control room and three smaller isolation rooms) are set on a diagonal to lend a feel of spaciousness while avoiding acoustic problems. Steven Klein did a great job of nicely tuning the rooms. They're not gigantic but they sound amazing. We designed it together based on my input from years of experience as a mixing and tracking engineer at large studios. The best thing about this space is that it's very quiet and focused. The intimacy allows you to hear every detail that you might have trouble with in a much larger commercial facility room."

Vintage Analog Equipment: Having started his career in the analog era, Greene balances keeping ultra-current with the new technology while maintaining and offering the use of some of the best vintage analog equipment he used in the 80s and 90s. His collection of vintage equipment is impressive and includes Neumann, AKG and Sony tube mics, RCA and Royer ribbons. Neve, API and Trident Mic pre's. UREI compressors, Lexicon and Bricasti reverbs, keyboards, guitars and amps. In his words, "It's not about just sounding good, but sounding right"—and he will find the mics and equipment that work best for the client. A full list of his digital and analog gear is available on the website.

Contact The Greene Room, 818-781-1144

MusiciansContact.com

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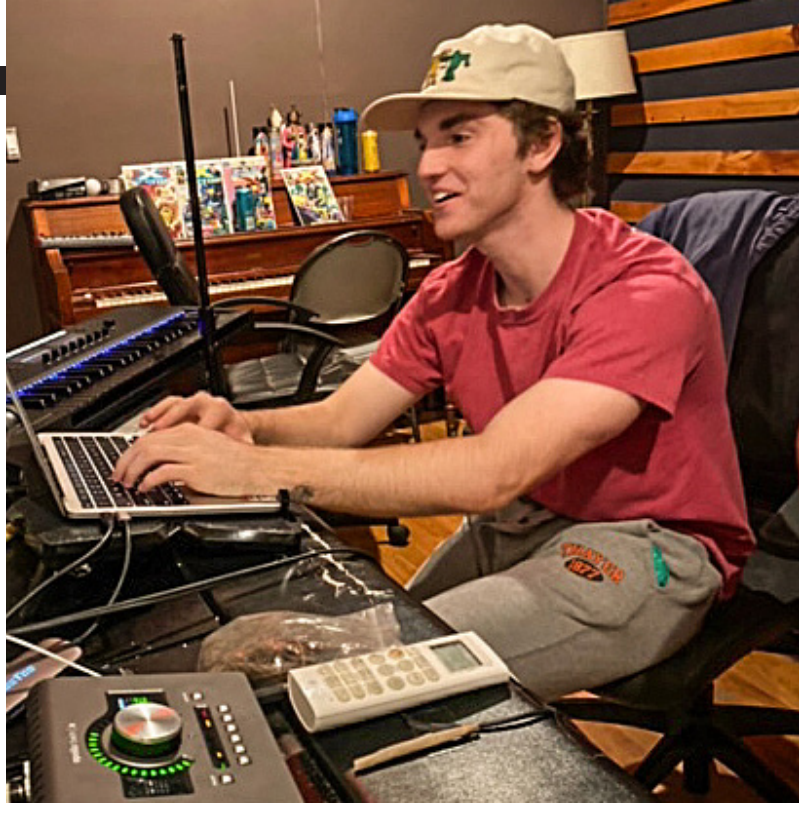
MUSIC CONNECTION

"Music Connection is an incredible resource for new Indie artists like ourselves and we feel extremely lucky to be showcased by them. We've earned opportunities, found bands to connect with and learned priceless music industry knowledge through our monthly subscription" – ***Move Like Creatures***

GRANT AVENUE

The legendary Hamilton, ON-based Grant Avenue Studio—established in 1976 and home to the likes of Gordon Lightfoot, Johnny Cash, U2, Sarah McLachlan and more—has officially changed ownership. It was sold to music and film industry pros Mike Bruce and Marco Mondano.



WALTER THE PRODUCER

Walter The Producer has created a sound all his own—an infectious blend of indie, disco-pop, and alt-R&B that has compelled the music world to take notice. Released via Slumbo Labs, his viral debut project, *No Substance Mixtape*, has been a launchpad for his career and landed him on an impressive number of personal playlists. Walter is pictured working at Slumbo Labs.

PET PROJECT STUDIO 606

Pet Project recorded their debut album at Studio 606 on the famous Sound City Neve mixing board. The SoCal band consists of current members of Feed the Kitty and Pet the Dog. Pictured (l-r): Jack Maher Jr., producer John "Lou" Lousteau, Jed Mottley, Mathieu Brousseau.

CHACHO IN AMERICA

Working on his upcoming album, Universal Germany artist Chacho (third from right) has found a home at Skip Saylor Recording with producers Edward "Chokobeats" Cortez, Bobby "Klydbeats" Ortiz, Victor "Shadow" Saavedra, and Patrick Sawodsky. Engineered by Lestor Mendoza and Alan Pohl.

PRODUCER PLAYBACK

It's all about the most simple and direct way to tell the story, to move the audience and to make them understand what's going on. It doesn't matter which style of music is used—I need to write in all styles. What's important is to get the story across in the simplest way possible. – **YAO WANG** *(Film, Video Game Composer, Immersive Audio)*

▲ JASON DERULO UNDERWATER

Underwater, a new podcast scripted series, starring Jason Derulo and Alexandra Shipp, from Warner Music Group's (WMG) in-house podcast network Interval Presents and produced by Clamor and Temple Hill Entertainment, has premiered.

▲ BRANDI CARLILE

Producer and acclaimed singer-songwriter Brandi Carlile is the featured guest on the latest episode of the highly popular TEC Award-winning Produce Like A Pro educational channel on YouTube (with an audience of over 740,000 subscribers), hosted by noted audio educator/producer/engineer Warren Huart.

▲ RALEIGH MIAMI GRAND OPENING

Raleigh Music Studios Miami held a grand opening party at their new Wynwood location. Over 100 guests attended including representatives of ASCAP and the Miami Mayor's office. The 2,500 square foot studio features four studio rooms, a live room and a 400 square foot lounge. Pictured are Steven Storch (co-President Raleigh Music Group), Eli Collazo (Studio Manager) and Peter Raleigh (co-President Raleigh Music Group).

NOAH SIEROTA

Noah Sierota, bassist with the Chino, CA sibling trio Echosmith, has dabbled in production ever since the band's 2013 debut *Talking Dreams*. In fact, he was exposed to engineering from a young age through his musician-father Jeffery David. For the 2023 third Echosmith record, the siblings chose Noah to guide it. "Cool Kids" from *Talking Dreams* has earned more than 145 million YouTube listens and in total the band has amassed more than one billion streams.

"I always knew what I wanted this record to be," Sierota says of producing Echosmith. "I spent a lot of time figuring out how I wanted to tell our story through music. I approach my production as an artist first because I am an artist. I did bring in other writers, musicians and our [former band member] brother Jamie, who helped to co-produce. My sister Sydney's input was also crucial. She's a huge part of what we do."

Echosmith was recorded largely in Sierota's home studio, which he's assembled over the past several years. But parts—drums in particular—were locked in at Lucy's Meat Market in Eagle Rock. Indeed, studio owner Pete Min was also recruited to engineer parts of the record. "He's smart and creative," the artist observes. "We then brought in friends and even non-musicians to show them what we'd done and to get their feedback."

Organically or intentionally, bands will nearly always evolve. Certainly that's happened with Echosmith, which Sierota ascribes to each song being like its own story or journal entry. "The storytelling on this record is more raw and honest," he notes. "It feels more personal than before. Every song is related to a story or experience. Sonically it's really different because we've grown as musicians and gave ourselves permission to do a lot more. I'm a big fan of capturing audio in high quality and then running it through something like a crappy foot pedal. You know: getting it perfectly and then humbling it."

THE 3 MOST IMPORTANT

. . . lessons he's learned as a producer are:

- **Give yourself space for contentment.**
- **It's okay to learn to do things in the way that you want to do them.**
- **Find a balance between needing and appreciating outside input but not being directed by it. The song is what should direct the production.**

Many creatives struggle with completing projects, not because they don't have ideas but because when there's no firm deadline, opportunities for change will always be found. Sierota isn't immune to such challenges. "I don't believe that a song can ever be finished," he observes. "There's always more that I could do. I'll hear some of our old stuff and think 'I wish I'd done something more.' But there's value in letting something be what it is."

Among his favorite studio gear is the Blue Bottle condenser tube mic, Hazelrigg compressors and Chase Bliss' CXM 1978 reverb effects pedal. "That thing is not just a guitar pedal," he asserts. "I used it all over the record and it was a ton of fun. The sonic quality is incredible. Being able to use faders instead of knobs changes how you're moving things."

U.S. dates are planned for the New Year. Meanwhile, Sierota aims to produce not only future Echosmith records but other bands as well. "When I move, I plan to build a full-on studio where I'll bring in outside artists," he says. "I want to be able to support them in the same way that I support my own band."

Experience echosmith.com, @echosmith, stem.ffm.to/echosmith; Contact Carla Senft and Amanda Curtis - Press Here PR, carla@pressherepublicity.com, amanda@pressherepublicity.com

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Frank Joseph: HARMAN International

Frank Joseph is the senior director of marketing for HARMAN International North America, Professional Solutions. A lifelong musician, he built his own recording studio and later worked for Gibson Brands. Nearly ten years ago he joined HARMAN International and has been integral to the ongoing operation of their Professional Experience Center in Northridge, one of four throughout the world. The 15,000-square-foot facility allows the audio, video and lighting gear giant to showcase its various brands including JBL Professional, AKG Acoustics and Crown International. For audio aficionados, it's like a visit to Willy Wonka's chocolate factory except that they gorge on gear rather than candy.

Music Connection: What's your career path been? How did you come to work for HARMAN?
Frank Joseph: I was a gigging musician for many years and had a recording studio. I was a young man at that point and I realized that I had no business being in business. I began a retail path through Guitar Center. I started at the stores and left as a vice president. I actually joined HARMAN on the consumer side, not the pro side. I started with headphones, helped build out that business and formed partnerships with companies such as Best Buy and Target. I ran the entire consumer marketing for five years before I started on the pro side five years ago and have been with them for almost a decade.

MC: What's been one of your career highlights at HARMAN?
FJ: Some of the big activations like our road shows, our Pro JBL Masterclass that we just finished in Las Vegas and helping to bring some of our pro install audio products to market. We film our AKG YouTube show Stories Behind the Sessions at our Experience Center for which we bring in various artists and producers. For example, we've had members of INXS, No Doubt and several composers. They tell the stories behind some of their epic recordings. It allows us to leverage our facility and our brand.

MC: What sets HARMAN International apart from other gear makers?
FJ: HARMAN is one of a few manufacturers that fits into the category of a true multi-brand, multi-vertical strategy. When you look at HARMAN across all the different verticals it's not just pro audio. It's our pro, consumer and automotive business. We're entrenched in several areas other than pro. We're one of the companies that stand out because of that strategy. There's also our ability to leverage our technology across the board. For example, AKG is now in Cadillac.

MC: What's unique about HARMAN's Professional Experience Center in Northridge?
FJ: It culminates all of our technologies in one space. So from arena sound to Martin Lighting to our install business. We have the ability to bring in a customer, walk them through all of the different technologies in one location and see it all working together.

MC: There are now four Experience Centers across the world. Are more planned?
FJ: There's been discussion of others but nothing is planned currently. The Experience Centers we have now round up a good amount of support for our global business.

MC: The Experience Center acts as a studio occasionally for various shows. For example, YouTube mix program Pensado's Place taped an episode there last year. How do you draw interest?
FJ: It's not really open for anyone to come in and tape. Usually bookings are made either through a partnership we have with a property or in the case of Stories Behind the Sessions, they're very planned and part of our roadmap. There are either customers coming through, lighting designers or front-of-house engineers touring the facility. It's booked about ninety-five percent of the time.

MC: What are some of the biggest challenges in your industry?
FJ: The biggest is continuing to generate new customers. Not a lot of people are playing musical instruments. It's more content and music creation and certainly we have tools that serve those needs. Another challenge is continuing to be innovative. From a marketing perspective, any organization that deploys a multi-brand strategy, defining the areas that are strategically important, investing in them and continuing to stay on-message are all key.

MC: What's one of your favorite HARMAN anecdotes?
FJ: No Doubt was one of the bands that had come into South Coast Recording, where I'd interned, to record their debut *No Doubt* for Interscope. When [drummer] Adrian Young came into the Experience Center to record our YouTube show, we reminisced about that.

MC: What are the three most important lessons you've learned about working in music and audio?
FJ: One, It's not the music business. It's the business of music. Two, Things ebb and flow. Everything isn't at 100 percent at all times Being flexible and adaptable is important. And three, This is a creative business. It's about the art of creating music.

MC: What's in HARMAN's future?
FJ: We'll continue to leverage the Experience Center as a place to have our customers try our new products and have conversations that will help us build and define our future. We'll also continue to update them with all of the latest and greatest HARMAN products.

MC: What's in your future?
FJ: I've never aspired to a certain position. I've been blessed to work with some great mentors and I've learned a lot from them. Most of my jobs have been self-made; the result of bringing a new idea to the table. I'll continue to do that.

Contact pro.harman.com/lp/los-angeles-experience-center

OPPS

Netflix wants a Specialist, Music Services.
The Netflix Music Services team is hiring a Specialist to facilitate music clearance, creative re-sourcing, licensing, and custom music creation for Netflix's Music Services Team which supports the Marcomms group. Our Marketing and PR campaigns are a key part of Netflix's ongoing success, and music is core to those campaigns. Apply at LinkedIn.

Warner Music Group needs a Scheduling Coordinator.
As a member of their scheduling team, you'll be part of a group that functions as the first point of contact to find out about new products, and effectively organizes all releases to all departments needing to know details throughout the company. Apply at Talent.com.

Universal Music Group wants a Product Manager.
Support Brand Directors in day-to-day project management of ecomm, retail and licensing launches for a series of clients, coordinate the end-to-end merchandise approval process for all licensed products. Maintain team documents, including but not limited to client contacts, music release and touring calendars, artist one sheets, strategy presentations, and internal documentation. Apply at Geebo.

For More Career Opportunities, check out musicconnection.com daily. And sign up for MC's Weekly Bulletin newsletter.

LABELS-RELEASES SIGNINGS

Claire Rousay signs to Thrill Jockey
Los Angeles experimental ambient artist **Claire Rousay** has signed with **Thrill Jockey**, and her debut album for the label will be released in 2024. "A meditation on loneliness, her new album is her most audacious work yet, synthesizing disparate and unexpected influences from throughout Rousay's long and varied career as a performer," says the label. Contact mike@thrilljockey.com for more info.

Odetta Hartman pens deal with Transgressive Records.
New York singer-songwriter **Odessa Hartman** has signed with **Transgressive Records**, and her long-awaited second album *Swansongs* will be released in March. "Odetta returns with her strongest set of songs to date—another fever dream of a record including the experimental pop of 'Goldilocks,' the dramatic string lead 'Dr No' and her radical re-working of the traditional 'Motherless Child' first made famous by her namesake Odetta," they say. Contact jeremy.saunders@pias.com for more info.

Nailah Hunter signs with Fat Possum Records.
L.A.-based multi-instrumentalist and composer **Nailah Hunter** signed with **Fat Possum** in October, and her debut for the label will be the *Lovegaze* album, due out in January. That will be preceded by the "Finding Mirror" lead single and video. "This song began with a bass line, which is not usually how I approach writing," Hunter said in a statement. "Of all the tracks on the record, it is the most purposeful departure from the comfort I found in making ambient music in the past." Contact judy@motormouthmedia.com for more info.

▲ LUCKY DAYE CELEBRATES THE RELEASE OF THAT'S YOU

Grammy-winning R&B star Lucky Daye has released new single "That's You," co-written by Bruno Mars. The single is accompanied by a video directed by Nick Walker (Future, Ella Mai, Playboi Carti). "I sang my heart out on 'That's You'," Days says. "I felt like I was on the moon. I want people to think about that one person they just can't be without when they listen. Hopefully that person is a good person." Contact kristin.somin@ledecompany.com for more info.

PROPS

Sony Music Latin celebrates Mexican music in L.A.
At a star-studded event in Los Angeles, **Sony Music Latin** celebrated Mexican music with live performances by **Conexión Divina**, **Joss Favela**, **Lupita Infante**,

DIY Spotlight

ABIGAIL BARLOW

A lot has happened to Abigail Barlow during her career already. As one half of Barlow & Bear, she won a Grammy for *The Unofficial Bridgerton Musical*, in the Best Musical Theater Album category in 2022, despite Netflix filing and later dropping a lawsuit.

She has a new single called "Rock Bottom," which she has released herself, despite label interest following that Grammy win. She's had an up-and-down time of it, and the song sees her reflecting on that. To be fair, it's been quite a journey.

"I've been singing and dancing since I was a wee babe, but songwriting became a main focus of mine in my teenage years," she says.

Barlow describes her solo sound as Katy Perry-meets-Alan Menken.

"I love the bubblegum pop sound of the 2010s, with the theatrical storytelling and timeless melodies of the mastermind behind so many of my favorite Disney musicals," she says.

As well as the "Rock Bottom" single, Barlow's *Princess Pop* album will be released early in 2024.

"'Rock Bottom' is the first single off my album *Princess Pop: A Musical Fable*, dropping in 2024," she says. "This project has been a way to tell my story. To let my fans in on my POV, experiences I've had, and lessons I've learned. Each song was written with a different crew of collaborators at different times over the last two years, and tells a piece of my story through the lens of a different fairytale."

Having made the choice to do this herself, Barlow has no regrets.

"The music industry is not what it once was, and that's great in some respects and not so great in others," she says. "As an independent artist, I try to look at the silver lining that being DIY means owning all of my music, having creative power over my project, and integrity in what my brand and messaging is."

For more information, visit abigailbarlowmusic.com.

DANICA ROBINSON

and **Virlán García**, as well as the presentation of **Luis Ángel** "**El Flaco**," who recently joined the Sony Music family. **Johnny López**, the youngest son of **Jenni Rivera**, accepted a gold record on behalf of his mother for the successful album *Misión Cumplida.* Contact eadut@eadut.com for more info.

Guitar Center announces Gabriel Dalporto as CEO.
The retail giant announced the appointment of **Gabriel Dalporto**, while also sharing that **Ken C. Hicks** has been named Chairman of the Board, and **Tim Martin** is returning to his role as Chief Financial Officer.

Dalporto states: "Coming from a family of musicians, some of my fondest memories growing up were of visiting Guitar Center stores with my father where we obsessed over the incredible guitars and cutting-edge equipment." Contact sarah.moon@edelmansmithfield.com for more info.

THE BIZ

Kirk Hammett partners with Epiphone.

Kirk Hammett, of trash metal titans **Metallica**, and **Epiphone** have unveiled a 1979 Flying V, in partnership with the **Gibson Custom Shop**. "I am extremely honored to be able to put out an Epiphone Flying V today," said Hammett. "Epiphone represents great sounding guitars at accessible prices, which is fundamentally important for up-and-coming musicians. I'm beyond pleased that I can offer the '79 Flying V in this capacity. It means so much to me to be able to put good guitars in the hands of young players." Contact lcoffey@primeprgroup.com for more info.

BRETT CALLWOOD has written about music for two decades, originally for Kerrang!, Classic Rock, Metal Hammer and more in the U.K. He's the author of two books, about Detroit proto-punks, the MC5 and the Stooges. He's now the music editor at LA Weekly and a columnist with idobi Radio, as well as here in *Music Connection*. He can be reached at brettcallwood@gmail.com

▲ BABY TATE PINES FOR JERSEY

As the golden period for women in hip-hop continues (and long may it!), Baby Tate has released new single and video "Jersey," a Justin Tranter-produced tune from her album *Baby Tate Presents—Sexploration: The Musical*. The artist formerly known as Yung Baby Tate is clearly in no mood to mess around as she raps, "I'm in the middle of New Jersey, Cryin' in the club, Thinkin' about all the ways you hurt me, You don't give a f*ck." Contact aishah.white@warnerrecords.com for more info.

The LEGAL Beat

BY GLENN LITWAK

COLDPLAY COUNTER-SUES ITS MANAGER

IN SEPTEMBER OF 2023 Coldplay's former manager, David Holmes, sued the rock group in London's High Court for breach of contract. Holmes claims the band owes him over $12 million for alleged commissions. Holmes contends the group failed to pay him for work relating to the band's next three albums.

In October of 2023 Coldplay countersued Holmes, asserting that he owes the band over $17 million for expensive tour equipment that was not usable. The equipment was purchased before the band's Music of the Spheres concert tour.

By way of background, Holmes began working for the group in 2000 and became their only manager on the 2005-07 tour. He stopped managing the band in August of 2023.

In their countersuit, Coldplay asserts Holmes borrowed $20 million in 2015 from the band's tour promoter, Live Nation, at an interest rate of 2.72 percent.

In 2018, Holmes took out a second loan for $10 million. The group claims that Holmes used his job as their manager to finance a property development project in or near Vancouver, Canada. The counterclaim states:

"To the best of our knowledge" Mr. Holmes used monies obtained from the loan agreements to fund a property development venture in or around Vancouver, Canada." The band claims that the Vancouver investment was "profitable."

Live Nation apparently issued a statement stating that it had "a strong and longstanding relationship with Coldplay" and "any past dealings with their management team were considered an extension of that relationship." A manager is supposed to act in the best interests of his client, and not use his position to obtain loans that benefit him, and not the client.

The group contends Holmes made various mistakes that cost them millions of dollars. The band states that before the tour started, costs increased dramatically and Holmes "Failed adequately to supervise and control the tour budget at all times," which eventually cost the band an additional approximately $21 million.

Coldplay asserts that Holmes had it incur a massive amount of unneeded concert tour expenses, such as $10.9 million on "bespoke stage pylons" and approximately $9.7 million on a "Jet Screen" which could not be used.

Holmes told Rolling Stone magazine: "Coldplay knows they're in trouble with their defense. Accusing Holmes of non-existent ethical lapses and other made-up misconduct will not deflect from the real issue at hand; Coldplay had a contract with Holmes, they are refusing to honor it and they need to pay Holmes what they owe him."

Managers are supposed to advise and consult with their clients, not make decisions on their own. It will be interesting to see if Coldplay approved the expenses. It is difficult at this juncture to predict who will prevail in this lawsuit.

GLENN LITWAK is a veteran entertainment attorney based in Santa Monica, CA. He has represented platinum selling recording artists, Grammy winning music producers, hit songwriters, management and production companies, music publishers and independent record labels. Glenn is also a frequent speaker at music industry conferences around the country, such as South by Southwest and the Billboard Music in Film and TV Conference. Email Litwak at gtllaw59@gmail.com or visit glennlitwak.com.

This article is a very brief overview of the subject matter and does not constitute legal advice.

We express our appreciation and gratitude to the generations of Musicians and Vocalists whose music so deeply enriches our lives.

It is a privilege and honor to support their enduring creativity.

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www.afmsagaftrafund.org

MUSIC CONNECTION

HOT 100 - 2023

LIVE UNSIGNED ARTISTS AND BANDS

ACEMO
Electronic/DJ
New York, NY
instagram.com/acemo

ADOBE COLLECTIVE
Folk/Country/Psych
Joshua Tree, CA
theadobecollective.com

AFTER
Pop/Trip-Hop
Los Angeles, CA
after95.bandcamp.com

AJIT SINGH
Indian Classical
France
facebook.com/ajitsitar.varanasi

ALBA MUSIK
Latin
New York, NY
albamusik.com

ANDREW RUDY
Pop/Punk/Emo
Los Angeles, CA
dorianplatinum.com

ANNABEL LEE
Rock
Los Angeles, CA
annabelleemusic.com

ASHLEY ELLE
Indie-Pop
Los Angeles, CA
ashleyellemusic.com

BECK PETE
Singer-Songwriter
Los Angeles
beckpete.com

BIG EYES PARKER
Folk/Country
Pumpkintown, SC
instagram@bigeyesparker

BILL GRISOLIA BAND
Blues/R&B/Rock
Long Beach, CA
billgrisolia.com

BLURRY
Alt-Pop
San Antonio, TX
itsblurrymusic.com

CANNING
Psychedelic`
Chicago, IL
canningmusic.net

CHARLIE ROGERS
Country
Nashville, TN
charlierogersmusic.com

COMBO TEZETA
'60s-inspired Psychedelic
Instro Cumbia Chicha
San Francisco, CA
combotezeta.com

CRASHING WAYWARD
Alternative Hard Rock
Las Vegas, NV
crashingwayward.com

CYCLER
Shoegaze/Post Punk
Los Angeles, CA
instagram.com/cycler_music

DAVID STARR
Blues/Americana
Cedaredge, CO
davidstarrmusic.com

DERDE VERDE
Indie Alternative Rock
Los Angeles, CA
derdeverde.net

DEVON GILFILLIAN
Neo-Rock-Soul
Nashville, TN
devongilfillian.com

DOWN NORTH
Psych-infused Punk-Soul
Seattle, WA
downnorthband.com

DOVE ARMITAGE
Alt-Pop
Los Angeles, CA
dovearmitage.bandcamp.com

ERIC SLEEPER
Singer-Songwriter
Randolph, NJ
instagram.com/ericsleepermusic

ERIN GREIDER
Pop-Rock
Los Angeles, CA
eringreider.com

ETERNAL
Death Metal
Phoenix, AZ
eternalaz.bandcamp.com

FEVER DOG
Retro Psychedelic Rock
Coachella Valley, CA
linktr.ee/feverdogrocks

FIIZ
Electropop/Dance
Brooklyn, NY
linktr.ee/fiizmusic

FLAMES OF DURGA
Heavy Rock
High Desert, CA
facebook.com/flamesofdurga

FRANK PELLIGRINO
Indie Rock
Los Angeles, CA
instagram.com/frunkpellegrino

GEORGE COLLINS
Pop/Rock
Nashville, TN
georgecollinsguitar.com

GOOD RZN
Alternative Pop
Los Angeles, CA
goodrzn.live

HAL HENKEL & THE FLYING CAMELS
Blues Rock Funk Jazz
Eugene, OR
facebook.com/haroldhalhenkel

HALF HEARTED
Rock
Hartford, CT
halfheartedmusic.com

HAZARD
Rap/Hip-hop
Ontario, CA
drankers.com

ILONA
Pop
Los Angeles, CA
instagram@iamilonamusic

INSECT SURFERS
Today's Psychedelic Surf
Instro Soundtracks
Los Angeles, CA
insectsurfers.com

IZZY RAYE
Dream-Pop
Brooklyn, NY
izzyraye.com

J4
Pop
Nashville, TN
J4sings.com

JARED BRADY
Alternative R&B
Los Angeles, CA
instagram.com/enjoyjaredbrady

JASON HERNDON
Country
Nashville, TN
jasonherndonmusic.com

JB ELWOOD
Alternative/Pop-Rock
Austin, TX
instagram.com/jbelwoodmusic

JENNY STENGER
Singer-Songwriter / Indie
Auburn, CA
instagram.com/jennystenger

JEWEL CHANG
Pop/R&B
Los Angeles, CA
instagram.com/jewelchangmusic

JOEY QUINONES
Chicano, Soul
Los Angeles, CA
joeyquinones.com

JOHN M.
Americana, Singer-Songwriter
Nashville, TN
johnm.com

JOJOMBER
Ukelele-fronted joy-pop
NYC/Columbus, OH
instagram.com/jojomber

JON GEIGER
Blues-Rock
Long Beach, CA
jongeiger.com

JUDY PASTER
Country/Americana
Nashville, TN
judypaster.com

JUGGLER
Shoegaze
Los Angeles, CA
instagram.com/juggler.la

KATIE FERRARA
Folk-Pop
Los Angeles, CA
katieferrara.com

KILO TANGO
Dream Pop
Los Angeles, CA
kilotango.bandcamp.com

KINGQUEEN
Pop Rock
Los Angeles, CA
kingqueenmusic.com

***MUSIC CONNECTION'S* ANNUAL LIST OF UNSIGNED LIVE PERFORMERS** puts the spotlight on individuals and bands who delivered unique excitement, expert musicianship and intriguing songcraft to stages during the past year. In addition to *MC* staffers and freelance writers, the contributors to this list include producers, club bookers, music attorneys, managers, agents and other industry professionals. Currently, *MC* has reviewers in Los Angeles, New York, Detroit, Seattle, and Nashville. Livestreams are also part of our offerings. So, to be considered for an aways-free live review, go to musicconnection.com/reviews/get-reviewed.

KING YOUNGBLOOD
Hard-edged Emo Rock
Seattle, WA
kingyoungblood.com

LATASHA LEE
Soul, R&B
Austin, TX
instagram.com/latashaleesing

LAW
R&B/Pop
Clifton, NJ
instagram.com/lawandmusic

LEE VILENSKY TRIO
Instro Spy/Soul
San Francisco, CA
leevilensky.com

LILY LANE
Retro
Dark Pop Soul
Los Angeles, CA
instagram.com/lilylane

LOS PONCHO TONES
Greasy Tumbleweed *(Instrumental)*
High Desert, CA
facebook.com/p/Los PonchoTones

MALAYNAH
R&B
Los Angeles, CA
instagram.com/malaynah

MARCUS MACKEY
Pop
Los Angeles, CA
marcusmackey.com

MC ABDUL
Rap/Hip-Hop
Palestine
music.empi.re/thepensthesword

MICHAEL ISAAK
Indie Folk / Indie Pop
Princeton, NJ
michaelisaak.us

MICO
Indie-Pop
Toronto, Canada
instagram.com/micotoronto

MOLLY HANMER & THE MIDNIGHT TOKERS
Americana Rock Blues
Los Angeles, CA
mollyhanmer.com

MORE FATTER
Rock, Pop
Los Angeles, CA
morefatter.band

NIIS
Punk
Los Angeles, CA
niisla.bandcamp.com

PAR AVION
Instrumental Music
Ever Evolving
Los Angeles, CA
vivaparavion.com

PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORY
Emo, Hyperpop, Shoegaze
Los Angeles, CA
instagram.com/photographic_memory

PHALASEE
Rap/Hip-Hop,
Los Angeles, CA
instagram.com/phalasee

RACHAEL SAGE
Americana Alt-Pop Folk
New York, NY
rachaelsage.com

RANDI DRISCOLL
Piano Driven/Singer-Songwriter/Americana/Pop
Nashville, TN
randidriscoll.com

REBECCA SICHON
R&B
Vancouver, Canada
rebeccasichon.com

ROSS LIVERMORE
Soul/Rock
Nashville, TN
rosslivermore.com

RYAN KINDER
Country
Nashville, TN
ryankinder.com

SABRINA SONG
Ethereal, Multi-faceted Singer-Songwriter
New York, NY
sabrinasongmusic.com

SANTA SALUT
Hip-Hop
Barcelona, Spain
instagram.com/santa.salut

SCHIZOPHONICS
Rock
San Diego, CA
schizophonics.com

SEAN C. KENNEDY
Folk/Country/Pop Rock
Nashville, TN
seanckennedy.com

SETH GLIER
Americana/Folk
Shelburne Falls, MA
sethglier.com

SHAYLEN
Country
Nashville, TN
instagram.com/shaylenofficial

SOLAR EYES
Stoner Rock
Los Angeles, CA
solareyes.bandcamp.com

STEVIE BILL
Pop
NY, NY/Amsterdam
steviebill.com

STORMHOUSE
Punk
Los Angeles, CA
storm-house.bandcamp.com

SUGARMILL SLIM
Blues/Punk
Los Angeles, CA
sugarmillslim.com

TERRY ILOUS & THE VAGABONDS
Flamenco
Los Angeles, CA
terryilous.com

THE ANDY VIMAR BAND
Blues
Los Angeles, CA
instagram.com/andy_vimar

THE DIRTY SHIRTS
Rock
Austin, TX
thedirtyshirtsus.com

THE NOBLE PRIX
Modern Garage Rock
Burbank, CA
instagram.com/thenobleprix

THE OTHER DYLAN THOMAS
Americana Blues Roots
N. Hollywood, CA
instagram.com/theother dylanthomas

THE SIXTH CHAMBER
Gothic Doom Rock
Los Angeles, CA
thesixthchamber.com

THE STOLEN MOANS
Female-fronted Avant-Punk Trio
Los Angeles, CA
stolenmoans.com

THE SWORDS OF FATIMA
Femme-fronted Exotic Tibetan Spy Punk
Los Angeles, CA
theswordsoffatima.com

THE TRABANTS
Instrumental Garage of the Future
Portland, OR
trabantsmusic.com

THE WORLD RECORD
Power Pop
Los Angeles, CA
theworldrecord.bandcamp.com

THE RIES BROTHERS
Alternative Rock/Indie Rock
Tampa, FL
riesbrothers.com

TIERRA LEGACY
Latin/Rock/R&B
Los Angeles, CA
tierralegacy.band

TRANSVIOLET
Indie Pop
Los Angeles, CA
instagram.com/transviolet

VELVET CHAINS
Hard Rock
Las Vegas, NV
velvetchains.com

VICTORIA WILLIAMS JOSHUA TRIO
Improvised Ambient
Joshua Tree, CA
victoriawilliams-joshuatrio.bandcamp.com

YAGO BOSS
EDM
Lima, Peru
linktr.ee/yagoboss

▲ DECCA/VERVE SIGNS RAKEI

Writer-producer-vocalist Jordan Rakei has signed for global recording with Decca/Verve Forecast (U.S.), releasing *Flowers*. Now with four studio albums, he first worked with Decca reimagining Donald Byrd's *Wind Parade* (2020). Rakei will headline the Royal Albert Hall in October 2024.

▶ MAVI TO WARNER

'80s analog sync Turkish band Mavi (founded by Mavi Solman with Arda—drums, Denizcan—bass, Ou—guitar) has signed a worldwide recording deal with Warner Music. First label single, "Sen Ve Yıldız," is out now (English version to follow). The band is recording now in London, with three more singles out soon.

▲ PRINCE ROYCE HALL OF FAME

SoundExchange has awarded Latin singer-songwriter Prince Royce with their Hall of Fame Award. With 22 No. 1's, over 70 awards, and every album reaching multi-platinum, he has expanded the reach of Latin music. Pictured (l-r): SoundExchange CEO/President Michael Huppe, Prince Royce.

Performing Songwriter Workshops

Registration is now open for 2024's lineup of Performing Songwriter Creative Workshops. All workshops take place in Nashville and are limited to small groups to maximize learning. Guests and topics include: Gretchen Peters: "Songwriting from the Inside Out"—Jan. 3-6; Mary Gauthier: "Finding Your Writer's Voice"—Feb. 14-17; Jonatha Brooke: "Discovering New Paths Into Songs"—March 27-30; Beth Nielsen Chapman: "Full Vocal Presence"—April 24-27; and Verlon Thompson: "The Art, Craft & Presentation of Your Song"—Aug. 18-21.

Details at: performingsongwriter.com/creative-workshops

Durango At The Beach

The Durango Songwriters EXPO returns Feb. 8-10 to Ventura, CA. With insights from industry experts, songwriter showcases, feedback sessions, one-on-one consultations, and next-level networking, Durango is the conference to attend for all songwriters at every level.

Registration is open now. Details at: durango-songwriters-expo.com

BMI Honors Berg

The 71st annual BMI Country Awards brought a special presentation for Matraca Berg, as she was honored with 2023's BMI Icon Award. In a career spanning almost 40 years, the Nashville Songwriters Hall of Fame inductee wrote her first hit, "Faking Love," in 1983 and was the first woman to have five No. 1's in a single year. With 11 Millionaire and 6 multiple Millionaire Awards, for songs including "XXX's and OOO's," "Wild Angels," and "I'm That Kind of Girl," top hits include Deana Carter's "Strawberry Wine" and "We Danced Anyway," and Martina McBride's "Wild Angels." The groundbreaking songwriter joins alumni including Willie Nelson, Merle Haggard, Dolly Parton, Kris Kristofferson, and Hank Williams, Jr.

▲ LARUE TEACHES GRACE

GRAMMY Award-winning singer (The 5th Dimension) Florence LaRue shares insights on growing gracefully with style, beauty, fitness, diet, and mindset with "Grace In Your Second Act." Vibrant and successful at 81, LaRue shares from her 58 years in music. See: amzn.to/40hHXsM

Royalty Payment Disparity

Music royalty payouts for recording are doing better than musical composition payouts, due to inaccurate or incomplete data on compositions. While accounting technology is helping, the tools are not fixing the issue on a broader scale.

In a recent webinar, royalty experts Jeff Price (CEO/cofounder of Word Collections, original cofounder of Tunecore) and Jack Cyphers (CEO/founder of BorderFox) discussed existing payment processing technology. According to the duo, "the data of sound recordings is usually accurate 70 percent of the time, whereas musical composition payouts are closer to 30 percent. You've got the system and the tech."

More at: bit.ly/3MlzLSE

JEN Adds Caren & AI Research

Mike Caren (Founder/CEO of record label and publishing company, Artist Partner Group) has joined Music AI Venture JEN (from Futureverse) as founding partner, alongside Shara Senderoff (Futureverse Co-Founder), Aaron McDonald (Futureverse Co-Founder) and Dr. Alex Wang (Futureverse Head of AI). Caren brings decades of experience from his time with Warner Music Group, Elektra Records, and Atlantic Records and has written/produced with Beyoncé, Kanye West, Bruno Mars, and others.

JEN intends to collaborate with artists, producers, and creators. Initial research showcased the advancement of music AI and introduced JEN-1, the first of an unprecedented high-fidelity model of text-to-music generation.

More at: futureverse.com

Perkins' Retreats and Critiques

The Brett Perkins Songwriting Retreats are gearing up for another year. Registration is open now for California and Denmark (see: listeningroomretreats.com/current-retreats), with more locations opening soon.

Online song consultations for song critique and development are also available with Alan Roy Scott. With a career spanning multiple decades, Scott has recorded over 200 songs across genres with artists including Celine Dion, Notorious B.I.G., Cyndi Lauper, Patti LaBelle, Gloria Estefan, Journey, Ricky Martin, Luther Vandross, The Neville Brothers, Cher, and Ray Charles, as well as television and film credits (including *Top Gun, Fame, Coming to America, First Wives Club,* and *Beverly Hills 90210*). Referrals through the Listening Room receive special rates. See: lrconsulting.mono.net

Iconic Nash

Iconic Artists Group (launched by Irving Azoff) has acquired the music rights to the catalog of legendary musician Graham Nash. With work including his time with the Hollies, as well as with Crosby, Stills & Nash, and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, the deal with the GRAMMY winner and Rock and Roll and Songwriters Hall of Fame (x2) inductee covers solo work and all three groups. Songs include The Hollies "Stop Stop Stop," "On A Carousel," and more. Work with Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young works include "Marrakesh Express," "Pre-Road Downs," "Lady of the Island," "Teach Your Children," and "Our House." Solo work includes albums *Songs For Beginners*, *Wild Tales*, and *Now* (from 2023).

West Coast Showcase

Looking for an opportunity to showcase your music? Join the West Coast Songwriter (WCS) for their winter showcase at Almost Famous Wine Lounge on Sunday, Feb. 25. Deadline for submissions is Monday, Dec. 4 at midnight.

Featuring selected performers chosen by a panel of distinguished judges, submissions are open to members and the public. Select three original songs and apply at westcoastsongwriters.org/showcase.

Selected performers receive a WCS Performance Certificate and a one-year membership to West Coast Songwriters. Winners secure a spot as an opener for a future show at Almost Famous Wine Company, as well as sponsor giveaways.

Milestones At MIME & 4U

Made in Memphis Entertainment (MIME) CEO David Porter has been honored by Belmont University in Nashville as part of an exhibit recognizing Tennessee songwriters. Highlighting the 2005 Songwriters Hall of Fame Award David Porter received with Isaac Hayes, along with handwritten lyrics from multiple Hall of Fame songwriters, students in Belmont's songwriter program will soon be studying materials from the exhibit. MIME's state-of-the art 4U Recording Atlanta studio has also been nominated for the Best of Georgia Awards in the Movie and Recording Studios Category.

MIME also cheers MIME Publishing songwriter-producer Real Red and 4U Recording Memphis studio engineer Kyle Javello for work with GloRilla, Moneybagg Yo, and others. Javello engineered track "F.N.F. (Let's Go)" from Hittkidd & GloRilla, received RIAA Gold and Platinum certification plaques for sales of 500,000 and 1 million.

ANDREA BEENHAM (aka Drea Jo) is a freelance writer and marketing consultant based in Southern California. The South-African born, Canadian-raised California transplant has a passion for music, people and fun. She can be reached at drea@dreajo.com

▲ BIG LOUD BIZZY

Big Loud Rock (alt/rock imprint of Big Loud Records and home to HARDY, etc.) has signed alt-pop songstress BIZZY. After wrapping her FRENSHIP support tour, "I Don't Get Breakups" is out now, after "My Age," "Out Loud," and "I'd Never Tell You." Her TikTok debut, "Anybody," hit 10 million streams.

▲ WASSERMAN'S CENTRAL CEE

Record-breaking British rapper Central Cee has signed for worldwide representation with Wasserman Music, following a joint venture with Columbia Records and Sony Music U.K. *Wild West* entered at No. 2 on U.K. charts, stayed in the Top 100 for over 40 weeks, and was 2021's best British debut.

▲ ASCAP CEO WARRIOR

ASCAP CEO Elizabeth Matthews was recently awarded 2023's SONA Warrior Award for her tireless creator advocacy. Tributes included MoZella, Stephen Schwartz, Ne-Yo, Marcus Miller, Desmond Child, John Platt, Ashley Gorley, and more. Pictured (l-r): Jimmy Jam, MoZella, Elizabeth Matthews, Terry Lewis.

▲ 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF WAR

Celebrating 50 years since 1973's *The World is a Ghetto*, The GRAMMY Museum hosted a Q&A between WAR founder Lonnie Jordan, producer xx, and EXTRA's Adam Weissler, before the band's performance. Collector's Edition box set is out now. Pictured (l-r): Jeremy Levine, Lonnie Jordan, Jimmy Jam.

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Shaylen: Return To Her Roots

Born in Chattanooga, TN and raised in Dallas, TX, singing in church and school choirs, Shaylen (born Shaylen Carroll) seemed destined for a career in country music. Instead, an audition for a Christian pop group launched a 10-year career in pop (that included contracts with Cash Money, CAA and Universal Music). A move to Nashville on the heels of being released from her label, Shaylen's sound has pivoted back to her country roots, and she has never felt more authentically herself.

With vocal, piano, and guitar lessons from an early age, and filming *The Wannabes* television show from age 14 (as a member of the pop group Savvy), Shaylen moved to Los Angeles at 18 to grow her career. Unfulfilled by the music being released, 2020's lockdown brought an opportunity to reevaluate her unfolding career, and a trip to Nashville to write for other artists brought clarity. Co-penning debut country single, "What If I Don't," Shaylen left the studio sobbing, recognizing that she was finally singing and writing the way she wanted to. "It's funny when you step out and let go of ego," shares Shaylen. "I came here for other people, and found myself."

Returning to Los Angeles, she asked her label about switching genre, but ended up being released from her contract. Without a label or management, she moved to Nashville to start over independently.

"Your big breaks are at the most detrimental, uncomfortable moments of your life," says Shaylen. "Record deals have been awesome, but I think the most uncomfortable moments—making the choice you are terrified to make—level you up. You do it and create the next stepping stone for your path. Those are monumental. The stepping stone is just evolving as a person."

Her experience with cadence, melody, and writing in Los Angeles helped to open doors in Nashville. Refraining from doing research on people before sessions helped Shaylen navigate Nashville less fearfully while pitching songs for writing rooms. Powerhouse trio Seth Ennis, Phil Barton, and Lindsay Rimes formed her first session. "I didn't realize who I was in the room with," Shaylen admits. After writing "What If I Don't," she knew it was big (it reached over 2.2 million streams in two months). Looking back, she had been writing country melodies all along. "I got more support than any days doing pop," she says. "This is what I'm supposed to be doing." Follow-up singles, "Roots" and "Do It Right The First Time" followed, each garnering over 500,000 DSP streams in month one.

"Other genres have become such a character-based thing," says Shaylen. "It's about the clip you post on TikTok that you hope becomes a trend. Country music... I love it. It's just about the damn song. I respect everybody in pop that's killing it. You have cracked a code that is hard. I fell out of love with it, but the knowledge I gained from writing pop? I wouldn't trade it for the world."

Reframing the loss of major label validation, Shaylen says she now gets to choose how things look. Inspired by people in coffee shops, long drives, and Pinterest quotes, her music is all about building chords, confessing, "I'm a big melody girl. The lyrics come later." A tattooed reminder on her hand about temporary feelings helps her navigate the conflicting ups and downs of being an artist. "I remind myself that maybe it's not right now, but it has to be out in the world," she says of her art.

Referencing Kate Bush's success with "Running Up That Hill," she adds, "It doesn't mean it's not going to work one day."

Shaylen says her new management is incredible. "My work ethic has never changed, but it's like a vintage car," she says. "somebody sees trash, [but] somebody [else] thinks it's the coolest thing. Sometimes you have to put yourself in a different setting with different people to realize you're valued."

Latest single, "Cowboys Never Cry" is out now. Additional tour dates and an upcoming full-length album follow shows in San Diego, Tucson, and Las Vegas.

Contact Taran Smith - Milestone Publicity, tsmith@milestonepublicity.com; Experience Shaylen: instagram.com/shaylenofficial

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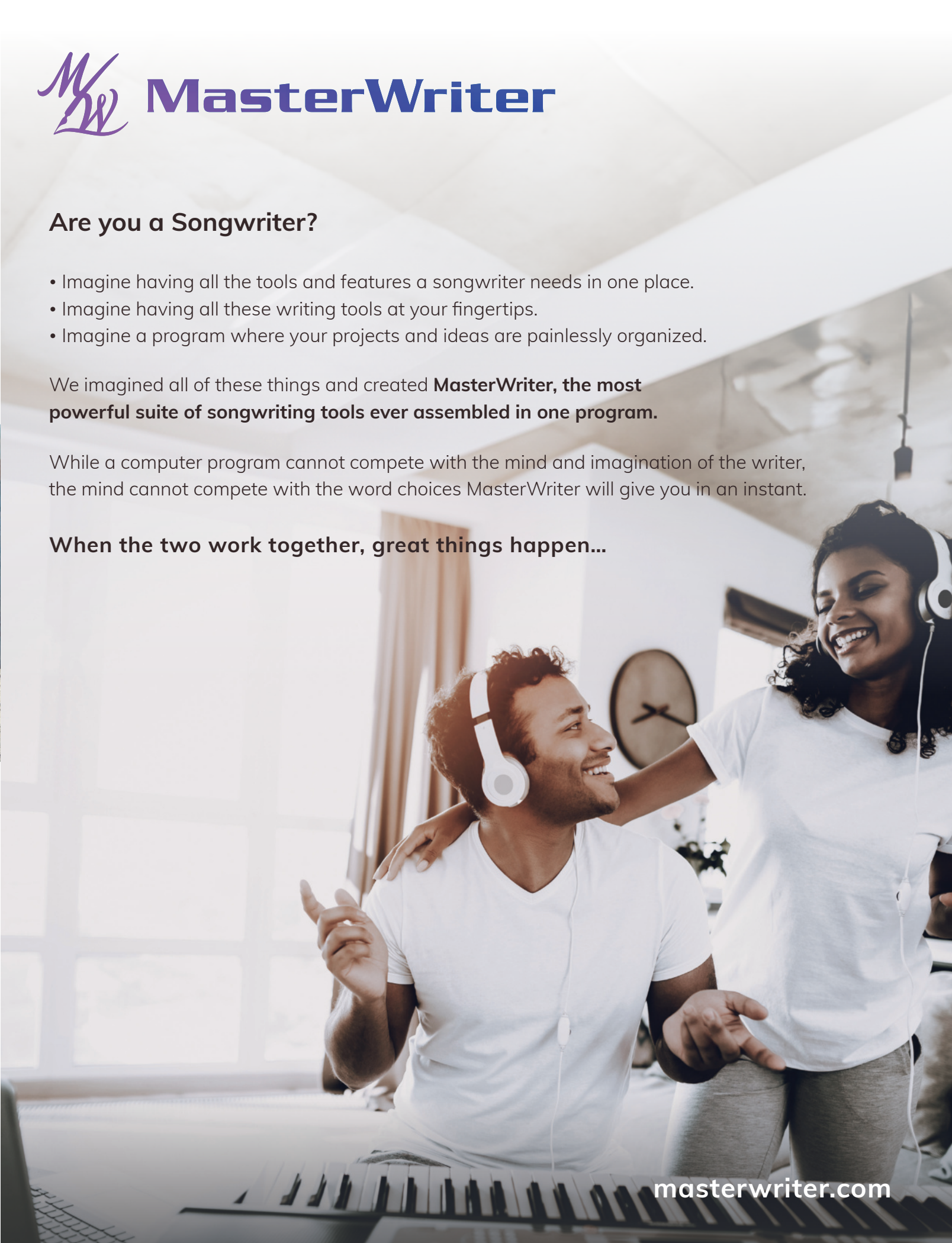


masterwriter.com

DROPS

Grammy-winning composer **Lorne Balfe** has released the albums tied to the Netflix original series, ***Life on Our Planet.*** The soundtrack features grand motifs to accompany the stunning nature docuseries with themes including dinosaurs and ocean life. In partnership with Industrial Light & Magic, the series "uses the latest technology and science to bring long-extinct creatures back to life." *Life on Our Planet* is narrated by **Morgan Freeman** and executive produced by **Steven Spielberg**. The soundtrack albums were recorded with the **London Symphony Orchestra** and **The Royal National Orchestra** and featured **Anna Lapwood** on the organ. For further details, contact Chandler Poling at chandler@whitebearpr.com.

After a long production hiatus, ***Live from Daryl's House*** returned in November on Hall's dedicated **YouTube** channel, with a brand-new season of six shows, one a week, through the end of the year, starting with **Squeeze** singer-songwriter **Glenn Tilbrook**, including Atlanta psychedelic jam band **Blackberry Smoke** singer-guitarist **Charlie Starr**; **King Crimson** guitarist and **Daryl Hall** solo album producer **Robert Fripp**; singer-songwriters **Andy Grammer**, **Lisa Loeb** and U.K. synthpop pioneer **Howard Jones**.

"I'm unbelievably excited about the new season," says Hall, who paid for the initial shows out of his own pocket before finding both sponsors and distributors, including the Tribune Company for broadcast TV, MTV's Palladia (later MTV Live) for cable, and AXS-TV through the years, executive-producing the series via his Good Cop Bad Cop Productions with longtime manager **Jonathan Wolfson**. "I love all the guests and I think we've gone to places, musically, that we've never gone to before," says Hall. For more, contact felix@wolfsonent.com

Sony Music Masterworks has released ***Killers of the Flower Moon (Soundtrack from the Apple Original Film),*** with music by the renowned and late guitarist and composer **Robbie Robertson** featured in **Martin Scorsese**'s new western crime drama based on true events. In addition to the original score, the release features six additional tracks heard within the film that

are authentic to the 1920s Oklahoma setting. Robertson spent much of his childhood on the Six Nations Reserve as part of his mother's Mohawk community, and for the film, he studied the music of the Osage Nation and researched popular 1920s music. Contact Marygrace Oglesby at marygrace@costacomm.com.

Co-composers **Antonio Naranjo** and **Meiro Stamm** collaborated on Build-A-Bear Entertainment and Foundation Media Partners' animated holiday feature ***Glisten and the Merry Mission,*** which released in theaters on Nov. 3. The holiday film (featuring **Billy Ray Cyrus, Dionne Warwick, Chevy Chase** and **Freddy Prinze Jr.,** among others, as voice actors) was scored by the Canadian Screen Award-winning Naranjo, who has worked on projects including ***Detention Adventure*** and ***Mittens & Pants,*** as well as Stamm, who has 20 years of experience in scoring film, television and stage productions. Contact kate.twilley@impact24pr.com for more information.

Film, TV and video game composer **Stefan L. Smith** scored the animated feature ***Batman: The Doom that Came to Gotham,*** which is now available in digital and physical formats and is a nominee at the upcoming Grammy Awards. In addition to being one of the first Black composers to work on a Batman film, Smith has also scored 20 episodic shorts and composed 20 original songs for ***Super Why's Comic Book Adventures,*** a series of 2D animated shorts to help expand the literacy skills of preschool and kindergarten children. He won the **2022 HMMA Award** for Best Score in an Animated Short Film and the **2021 ASCAP David Rose Award** for Film Scoring. Contact kate.twilley@impact24pr.com.

OPPS

You can apply to perform or otherwise participate at the annual Super MAGFest, which will take place Jan. 18-21, 2024 in National Harbor, MD. The event celebrates video game music, art and culture and supports game developers, composers and others within the industry. Learn more and find deadlines and more information for participating and showcasing your work at super.magfest.org.

The Berlin International Film Scoring Competition offers emerging composers a chance to showcase their work and win awards. Jan. 15, 2024 is the deadline to submit your work, with winners announced March 1. For more information and to submit your composition, visit bifsc.org.

Submissions will be accepted for the 2024 Submissions for the 2024 Contemporary Dance Choreography Festival until Jan. 31, 2024 to perform at the event on July 27. Selected dancers will be notified by Feb. 28. Learn more at cdcfest.com/submit-your-work.

PROPS

Now in their 16th year of graduating industry leaders, the **Nashville Film Institute**, flagged as a "top 25 film school" has recently added several new faculty members. Industry Pioneer and Clio Award winning Director **Billy Rainey**, who directed MTV's *The Real World* and who executive produced and directed *PUNK'D* with Ashton Kutcher, has joined the 2023 NFI faculty. Also new to the NFI faculty is super-indie Director and Producer **Scott W. McKinlay** (Creep Van, GAG, BOIL, Ram Trucks) and former Program Director, Los Angeles Film School and former Department Chair at Full Sail University, **Robert Perry.** Get more info about the Nashville Film Institute at nfi.edu and follow NFI on Instagram.

The inaugural **CMT SMASHING GLASS: A Celebration of the Groundbreaking Women of Music**, debuted in November to celebrate the women in music who broke records, defied stereotypes and blazed trails for other female artists. CMT honored the careers of musical legends **Patti LaBelle** and **Tanya Tucker**, who have appeared in films and television as well as been credited with helping to pave the way for fellow women in music. Through once-in-a-lifetime performances and documentary storytelling, the program featured performances by the two honorees as well as tributes by artists they inspired. Contact cmtcommunications@cmt.com for further details.

Simon Franglen received the Discovery of the Year Award at the 23rd Annual World Soundtrack Awards, which took place Oct. 19-21 this year. The award celebrates the best emerging talent in film music. Veteran composers **Laurence Rosenthal**—whose career spans more than six decades of composing for film, television and theater—and **Nicola Piovani**—perhaps best known for scoring the acclaimed film ***Life is Beautiful***—also each received a Lifetime Achievement Award this year, while **Volker Bertelmann** won the Film Composer of the Year Award. For a complete list of winners, visit worldsoundtrackawards.com.

The Game Awards, which hit 103 million live streams last year, annually recognizes the best in the video game industry, including the best score, original song and/or licensed soundtrack; best audio design; and more. This year's awards will be held Dec. 7 and streamed live from the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles. See a list of this year's nominees and vote for your favorite at thegameawards.com/nominees/best-score-and-music.

It has been announced that the **14th** Annual Guild of Music Supervisors Awards will return to the Wiltern Theater in Los Angeles on March 3, 2024 to celebrate the best in the music supervision industry, which brings music to the screen through film, television, video games, advertising and trailers. Learn more about the upcoming ceremony, categories and past winners at gmsawards.com and contact Chandler Poling at chandler@whitebearpr.com.

CBS will present **Willie Nelson's 90th Birthday Celebration**, a concert special honoring the legendary career of music icon Willie Nelson, Sunday, Dec. 17 (8:30-10:30 PM, ET/PT) on the CBS Television Network, and streaming on Paramount+ (live and on demand for Paramount+ with SHOWTIME subscribers, or on demand for Paramount+). The star-studded special, recorded live earlier this year across two nights before a sold-out crowd at the legendary Hollywood Bowl, celebrates Nelson's milestone 90th birthday and the 12-time GRAMMY® Award-winner's contributions to popular culture and music.

JESSICA PACE is a music journalist-turned-news-reporter based in Durango, CO. She is from Nashville, where she started a writing career by freelancing for publications including American Songwriter and *Music Connection*. Contact her at j.marie.pace@gmail.com.

OUT TAKE

Eric Foster White

Musician/Producer/Screenwriter

Web: linkedin.com/in/ericfosterwhite
Contact: Mike Jones, mjones@shorefire.com
Most Recent: MusicClubKids

Eric Foster White credits his alma mater, the University of Miami, for drastically raising the bar for his musical standards and setting him on the path to becoming the Grammy-nominated songwriter, producer, musician and screenwriter he is today. A trombone player who once toured with Frank Sinatra, Foster White traded the horn for a career in producing and songwriting after his demo recordings led to a contract with Jive Records. He then went on to write several hit records for the likes of Whitney Houston, Britney Spears and the Backstreet Boys.

These days, White is working on *MusicClubKids!*, a YouTube musical show for kids in which White—with the permission of the original artists and songwriters—has transformed some of the day's biggest pop hits into kid-friendly songs and narratives. The idea sprang from a car ride with his three-year-old niece.

"Ed Sheeran's 'Shape of You' came on the radio, her mom clicked it off because of the lyrics, and my niece was perturbed, because she loves that song," he says. On the spot, White came up with the idea for the more age-appropriate "I'm in Love with My Doggy"—an adaptation of Sheeran's song.

"It's like Weird Al-meets-KIDZ BOP," White says. "And we don't want to denigrate the original artists' songs; the idea is just to introduce these pop songs to the next generation." MusicClubKids! has just released a holiday album, which adapts OneRepublic's "Runaway" to the new "Holidays," and Ed Sheeran's "Bad Habits" into "Ask Santa." White says that industry opportunities are actually better for aspiring songwriters today.

"Music is less a monoculture; there are more niche markets and niche styles," he says. "It's still competitive, but now there are lots of other artists, maybe of lesser stature, that you can start out writing for."

▶ RAYE AT 9:30

After a summer of festival dates and supporting SZA on her sold-out S.O.S. Tour across Europe and the U.K., Raye is headlining her My 21st Century Blues World Tour. The south London-native is pictured at tour opener at the 9:30 Club in Washington, D.C.

▲ EVERCLEAR SOCAL SOUND

Everclear frontman Art Alexakis visits with SoCal Sound 88.5FM's Nic Harcourt to talk about all things Everclear, including their latest U.S. headlining tour as well as their new *Live at The Whisky a Go Go* album, out now on Sunset Blvd Records.

◀ EMINEM IN ARABIA

At the Battle of The Baddest main event in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, boxer Francis Ngannou won against Tyson Fury. Eminem, who performed, is pictured in attendance.

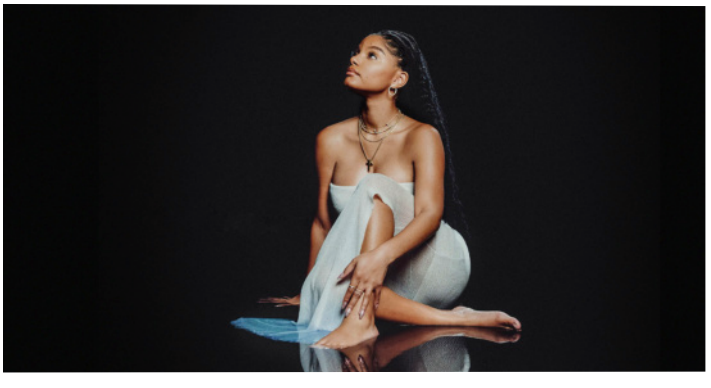
▲ BTO IS BACK

For 25 years, Randy Bachman didn't have the rights to the name Bachman-Turner Overdrive or BTO. But he does now and they are on the road. Mike Gormley and David Forman were at Mercury Records when BTO broke wide open. The three of them got together at L.A.'s YouTube Theater when BTO recently came to town.

– JOSEPH MALTESE *josephm@musicconnection.com*

▲ WU TANG FOREVER

Pictured (l-r): Inspectah Deck, XX and GZA of Wu-Tang Clan perform onstage during their NY State of Mind Tour—coheadlining with Nas—at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, TN.



◄ HALLE'S ANGELS

Halle Bailey recently announced the recipients of the "Angel Scholarship" and awarded a $10,000 scholarship to each to be used toward furthering their respective education in the arts. The selected students include: Aliyah D. Walker of Memphis, TN, Crystal Ike of Houston, TX, Melodee Pouponneau of Brooklyn, NY and Phyllise Tolliver of Atlanta, GA.

► AVETT BROTHERS

The Avett Brothers played to a full house at Vina Robles Amphitheatre in SoCal. Pictured (l-r): Paul Leatherman (Vina Robles Amphitheatre), Mike Marsh, Scott Avett, Bob Crawford, Tania Elizabeth, Bonnie Avett-Rini, Cindy Huang (Nederlander Concerts), Joe Kwon, Seth Avett.

MUSIC CONNECTION

Tidbits From Our Tattered Past

2000–DJ Quik–#12

In this vintage issue of *MC,* DJ Quik made one thing clear: "I never wanted to be mainstream. I ain't mainstream material. Underground people should stay underground when they're real." The issue also features an interview with legendary producer Jack Douglas and former Talking Head turned producer Jerry Harrison, who said, "I don't want to be known for just one kind of thing. Not only because I could go out of fashion, but because I don't want to get bored."

2013–Fall Out Boy–#5

Our cover story interview with Fall Out Boy yielded this invitation from Pete Wentz: "If you see me, hand me a demo. I listen to all that stuff. That's how Fall Out Boy tried to get found, and that's how we found Panic At The Disco." The issue also features a revealing Signing Story on country band Paramalee: "We were out there for 10 years before we got signed."

Jenny Lewis

Joy'All To The World

By Dan Kimpel

Photos by Bobbi Rich

Headlining coast-to-coast shows with her Joy'All Ball, joining the Beck and Phoenix Summer Odyssey tour, and in performances from Madison Square Garden to The Hollywood Bowl as a member of The Postal Service on their historic 20th anniversary tour with Death Cab for Cutie: With the release of her fifth solo record, *Joy'All,* Jenny Lewis is undeniably high-profile.

From a show business family, Lewis successfully survived her extensive childhood acting career to first emerge musically with Rilo Kiley, a band whose pensive songs became touchstones for a coming-of-age generation in the new millennium. Her solo debut Rabbit Fur Coat (with The Watson Twins) cast her as a sympathetic chanteuse cloaked in vintage fashion, imbued with quirky, approachable cool.

As the title might indicate, the Blue Note/ Capitol release, *Joy'All,* helmed by Nashville producer Dave Cobb, is charmingly upbeat, in contrast to the paradoxical asides, existential truths, and new chapters of hard-won wisdom that are revealed within.

Music Connection: Greetings, Jenny. It certainly seems as if there is a huge upswing in your media visibility at this moment.
Jenny Lewis: I think it's just all happening at once. I've been in The Postal Service for 20 plus years. I've been doing my own music since 2006, and then I've been in a bunch of side projects. So, I'm always doing a couple of things at once, but the culmination of this 20-year anniversary tour with my album release so close by is definitely a lot. I hope people aren't going to get sick of me—because I'm sick of myself!

MC: When do you sleep?
JL: I sleep on a tour bus in the fetal position, with earplugs, a sleeping mask, and a night guard. It's very cute.

MC: You are featured on a new segment of the television show, *Austin City Limits*. It is so interesting how the songs from the latest record translate in a live context. "Love Feel," for example, is a barnburner.
JL: *Austin City Limits* is so cool, because you get to do your full show, 70 minutes, or whatever you're playing on the road, and then you get to pick the songs for the edited segment. But they make you pick the songs as soon as you walk off of the stage. So, you've just done this incredible thing with multiple cameras and a live audience, and then they say, "Okay—pick the songs now." So, in keeping with the album cycle, obviously the new ones are the most exciting, but that was my third performance on ACL, so I had to remember what I had played in 2014, and with Rilo Kiley. So, it's kind of a stressful situation.

MC: You write by yourself, correct?
JL: I do. I have, in my career, also written with my boyfriends, who I have happened to be in bands with. My co-writing has been pretty much limited to within these relationships. I never have done co-writes with any other writers in Nashville, or artists. For me, the most important thing has been finding my autonomy as an artist in the world, and honing in on my true voice. On this record, I really wanted it to be conversational. And going into the studio with Dave Cobb, talking about what we were going to make, I made it very clear to him that I wanted the vocals and the stories to be very present, as if we are having a conversation throughout the record.

MC: *Joy'All* is so mellifluous, so when lyrics come in that are edgier, deeper, and darker, it's an interesting contrast. There is a lot of air in the sound of the record, enhancing the vocal clarity.
JL: It's very sparse. We cut it live on the floor at RCA Studio A in Nashville. It is just incredible to be in that building, and we cut it to tape. Dave is a big fan of miking the drums Beatles' style,

"Onstage, especially doing this tour with The Postal Service, we played **three soldout shows at The Hollywood Bowl.** And there were a couple of moments where I just had to say, "Take all this in right now. Take a breath and look out, because **this is as wonderful as it gets."**

and it was a very small band. After we cut it live, Dave wanted me to play all of the keys, and all of the other additional parts. So, he would hum something, and I would play it on the piano, or the Mellotron, which we used quite a bit.

I think he wanted to keep it true to the demos that I had cut at home in Nashville on my iPhone, because I don't have a computer, so I do everything in Garage Band. And then when we mixed the record I thought, "This is a Nashville record, I'd love to have some pedal steel, and some extra bits, frequency-wise." So, we had Greg Leisz play pedal steel on a handful of songs, and then added Jon Brion, who shares a space with Greg Koller who mixed the record. I got to be in the studio with Jon as he was listening to the songs and finding those moments, like on "Apples & Oranges," it's a B-bender guitar.

MC: "Apples & Oranges" reminds us of Tommy James and the Shondells.
JL: Oh wow, you picked up on that! We had a "Crimson and Clover" tremolo on pretty much the entire track. Initially, we went overboard, but it's in there. So you are feeling that tremolo, but it's more in the mix now. I'm a big *Nuggets* (historic '60s garage bands) fan. I love all that. I would love to make a record one day that is as rough sounding as some of those recordings.

MC: You are certainly candid in sharing what seem to be autobiographical elements in your songs.
JL: I am creating a story. There is a twist in Rilo Kiley's "Does He Love You." That's not a true story, but there are elements within the story that ring true. That song was inspired by "Escape (The Piña Colada Song)" by Rupert Holmes. I wanted to write something with a twist in the last verse. Real life is interesting. I have had such an interesting 47 years on the planet: growing up in a musical family in Hollywood, in the Valley, a ton of family stuff went on, so it's always been right there for me to channel and write about. I'm just trying to get it down on the page, because it keeps happening. It's wild stuff!

MC: Having grown up in a show business family, one of the lessons you probably learned early was it is not all glamor and glitz.
JL: In my family we were working class musicians, three generations of vaudeville performers, dancers, musicians; Las Vegas and Alaska lounge performers. My dad was in prison for a couple of years. He taught guitar to some of the guys up there. Music is the through-line in good times, prosperous times, and in tragic times. It's always the music that has kept us together, and luckily I am a songwriter—the first songwriter in my family. So, I've been able to carve out a little spot for myself, because I am creating the material. But I come from covers, because my whole family would do them. And they were so good. But they didn't write for some reason. That's what differentiates me from the rest of my crew.

MC: The process of writing the songs for *Joy'All* came from an online songwriting workshop. Tell us about it.
JL: Part of the record was written during a songwriting workshop that Beck put together in 2021 during the pandemic, while we were still at home. I had about half of the songs for the record already written. The workshop included a very eclectic and awesome group of people. Adam Green (Moldy Peaches), Sean Lennon, and Devendra Banhart who was there in the beginning. We would have prompts: write a song with 1-4-5 changes; write a song of all clichés—which is "Love Feel." The prompts would come, and we would write and record and send the song to the group a day at a time. It's not something that I had ever done before. I write from this magical channeling zone. You don't know where it comes from, and then a year later you are like, "Oh, that's what that song is about." Writing with prompts, you will never run out of things to write about.

MC: Songwriters will talk about sometimes channeling lyrics and melodies that seem pre-existent.
JL: There are different ways to it. Some people

sit down every day to write. I imagine Ben Gibbard (Death Cab for Cutie, The Postal Service) is very regimented with his schedule in writing. I'm writing every day, but it's a little more freeform; not sitting down, but I'm out in the world where something will occur to me, and I'll grab my voice notes, and go back home and figure it out on piano or guitar.

MC: Do these fragments then become the centers of songs?
JL: For the most part, a feeling or an idea, or I will be jamming in my music room. I have this drum machine that J.J. Cale used on his records, so I might hit that, and I'll have my guitar or bass, pick a key, and then something will come out of that. I will typically carve it into existence over a period of time. But sometimes songs arrive fully formed like "Just One of the Guys," from *The Voyager*. That one just arrived, and I don't know how it happened. Then the homework comes. I am always editing up until I record the song. And I'll record it on my phone and work on the lyrics as I'm overdubbing drums, bass, and keys. I will do everything, and the lyrics come out of the production, as I'm figuring it out. Once I am going in the studio I will continue to edit the lyrics until the day of—moment of, occasionally.

MC: We think of the meaning of words versus the sound of words. We like the use of the word "ruminate," in the line from "A Puppy and a Truck" that says "...Time to ruminate/What the fuck was that?"
JL: (Laughs) If there is a word for the pandemic, it would probably be "ruminate." I spent March to October 2020 at my house in California, until I took a flight to Nashville that fall. I took it very seriously, and in some ways it was very good for me. I was totally alone. I had nothing on the books for the first time since I was a kid. When you are a performer, there is always this underlying anxiety. If you have a show coming up, it's just part of the gig. So, all of that went away. For the first time in my life, I felt totally free. Obviously, I was scared, and experiencing everything everybody else was, but I felt off the hook.

MC: For some, it was a good excuse to grow a beard. I bet you didn't.
JL: I didn't grow a beard, but I grew two marijuana plants that were, like, six feet tall. I grew them legally! They were beautiful. I did it totally on my own. Grew, trimmed, cured, jarred...it was absolutely incredible.

MC: And you acquired a dog, Bobby Rhubarb, immortalized in your song "A Puppy and a Truck."
JL: I was never able to have a dog before. I've been on the road for 26 years, out there playing music, so my real life has definitely taken a back seat. Having a couple of years at home and being able to take care of an animal like that has changed me in such an amazing way. And I've become a bit of a stage mom, as is the family tradition. So Bobby Rhubarb has an Instagram account, and when we go out in the world some people say, "Oh look! It's Bobby Rhubarb!"

MC: The song "A Puppy and a Truck" is so likeable.
JL: Thank you. I was very dear friends with

Quick Facts

- The song "Psychos" from *Joy'All* became the first Jenny Lewis song to hit No. 1 on the Adult Alternative Airplay chart.
- The Jenny Lewis touring band is currently comprised entirely of female musicians.
- As an actress, Lewis appeared in over a dozen teen movies, including *Troop Beverly Hills*. Cast in a multitude of episodic television guest spots, she also played Lucille Ball's granddaughter in the short run of the *Life With Lucy* sitcom.
- Her 2014 full-length *The Voyager* was an emotional compendium influenced by Rilo Kiley's demise, and the death of her father, Eddie Gordon.
- Among Lewis' past side projects was the duo Jenny & Johnny, with Johnathan Rice, with whom she shared a 12-year relationship.
- Following her breakup with Rice, Lewis shared an apartment in New York with Annie Clark, aka St. Vincent. With friend Tennessee Thomas and Erika Foster, she performed as Nice As Fuck, and released a one-off collection in 2016.
- Also in 2016, Lewis flew to Haiti with Jackson Browne, to join a cast of global musicians in a benefit project called *Let The Rhythm Lead: Haiti Song Summit, Vol.1*. In her song "Under The Supermoon," Lewis finds solace from the world's problems among her new Haitian friends. She performed the song with Browne and Malian vocalist Habib Coite'.
- A line in "Under The Supermoon" chronicles her reaction to the 2016 Presidential election with this couplet: "I've never had such a fright/I gasped on election night."
- Past Lewis recordings have enlisted illustrious players like Ringo Starr, Jim Keltner, and Benmont Tench from The Heartbreakers.
- The video for "Puppy and a Truck" includes a character wearing a dog suit. As he removes the dog head in the concluding shot, the character is revealed to be Harry Styles.

Jimmy Buffett and his family. I was so lucky to be able to spend time with them, and learn how to be off the road. Jimmy had two dogs, they were with him everywhere, and there was this joy for life. And if you are hanging out with the Buffetts, you are getting in the water, even if you don't want to. I'm not a beachy or boaty person, but they were like, "Get in the water Lewis," and the dogs were there. Jimmy inspired "A Puppy and a Truck". We miss him so much.

MC: You reference the late Nashville artist from the early '60s, Skeeter Davis, as an influence on *Joy'All.* She is an artist who is sometimes underestimated.
JL: We know her songs, but we don't know it's her singing them. What a great songwriter. I made the record and I was doing the album cover photo shoot at my house in Nashville with my friend Momma Hotdog—Bobbi Rich—

> "I'm writing every day, but it's a little more freeform; not sitting down, but I'm out in the world where something will occur to me, and I'll grab my voice notes, and go back home and figure it out on piano or guitar."

and we went into this vintage store to look for something for me to wear. On the wall of this place called Black Shag Vintage was a green and white striped suit. We pulled it down, and it said it had belonged to Skeeter Davis. The reference for the album cover was a classic Skeeter Davis photo, and I'm wearing her costume on the cover of Joy'All. There are these signs from the universe that you're on the right path. If you pay attention, they are there.

MC: You toured with Harry Styles—what an interesting pairing.
JL: It was the first show out of the pandemic that I did in the fall of 2021. I was terrified. I was vaccinated, but I am asthmatic. There were a lot of emotions. Harry picked me to open the tour—it wasn't a business thing. It was everyone's first shows back. The crowds were so loving, and so open, and beautiful, and sparkly with feather boas—a beautiful way to come back to playing music and a massive undertaking. I had never done a tour this big, but it felt intimate because we were in our bubbles. There was no press, no one backstage, and we didn't eat in restaurants. So it was like the biggest indie tour that ever existed. It felt DIY, although it was massive.

MC: A question based on your lyrics from the title song, "Joy'All." Do we all get a little bit wiser every day?
JL: I think we do. That's the paradox of being a human being—we are getting wiser but our bodies are deteriorating. You come into the world so innocent, but the older you get, you learn a little more. Hopefully, you learn to be more compassionate—especially to be more compassionate with yourself, which is so important.

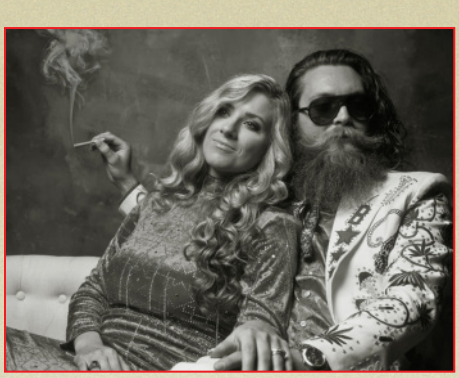
MC: Your astrological sign is Capricorn. Do you like to plan?
JL: I'm a Capricorn, so I'm climbing the mountain steadily, slowly but surely. As a kid, I used to make these handmade calendars. I couldn't wait until the end of the school year. I am a planner by nature, but I've been doing a meditation practice since the first of the year, so I am trying to be more in the moment. With my schedule, I am forced to plan about three days in advance. I'm trying to enjoy the day, the moment, and the hour.

Onstage, especially doing this tour with The Postal Service, we played three sold out shows at the Hollywood Bowl. And there were a couple of moments where I just had to say, "Take all this in right now. Take a breath and look out, because this is as wonderful as it gets. This may not happen again. Be present in the moment. Be grateful." I looked out, and I wasn't nervous at all. 18,000 people out there, and I felt so connected to L.A., so connected to 20 years of this record, and my other records. It's important to be in the moment, and appreciate these beautiful times.

Contact Jillian Condran, jillian@nastylittleman.com

TOP 25 NEW MUSIC CRITIQUES

Amanda Stewart . . . **9.0**

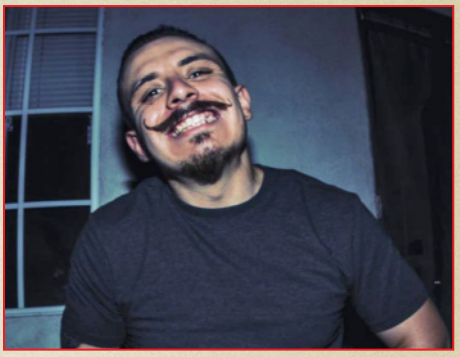


Alyssa & Wayne . . . **8.6**

Remy Riley . . . **8.6**

Stacy Antonel . . . **8.8**

Jenna Torres . . . **8.6**



Don Lincoln . . . **8.4**

Barely Legal . . . **8.8**

Hazelrigg Brothers . . . **8.6**

Jacqriot . . . **8.4**

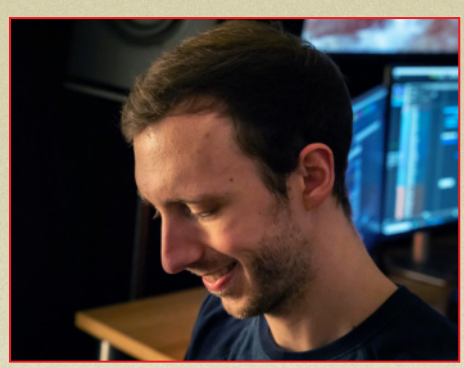
Zoe Butler . . . **8.6**

Olivia Reid . . . **8.6**

Marilyn Scott . . . **8.4**

- 2023

Last Planet . . . **8.4**



Raphael Fimm . . . **8.3**

Nicholas Johnson . . . **8.2**

Parker Barrow . . . **8.4**

Vine Sweetland . . . **8.3**

Ducky Neptune . . . **8.2**

Onoleigh . . . **8.4**

Marcia Hadjimarkos . . . **8.3**

Noah Riley Teal . . . **8.2**

Barricane . . . **8.2**

Hotboi Ty . . . **8.4**

Hidden Guide . . . **8.2**

CarbonWorks . . . **8.2**

TOP 20 PROSPECTS - 2023

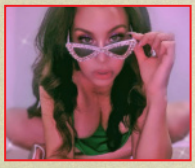
Greg Adams & East Bay Soul . . . **8.2**

Supergloom . . . **8.2**

Coco Jones . . . **8.0**

Me Like Bees . . . **8.0**

Circle The Earth . . . **8.0**

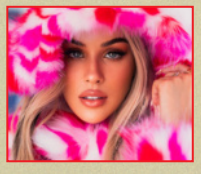


Josy B . . . **8.0**

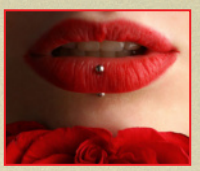
Lucie Tiger . . . **8.0**

Kinnfolk . . . **8.0**

Freefall Rescue . . . **8.0**



Briana Piedra . . . **8.0**



The Soft Parts . . . **8.0**

The Scooches . . . **8.0**

St. James Way . . . **8.0**

Amanda Ayala . . . **8.0**

Skinny Hightower . . . **8.0**

Hot Bodies in Motion . . . **8.0**

Renee Ruth . . . **7.8**

Babilonia . . . **7.8**

Cuttaman 100Gran . . . **7.8**

Farah Camille . . . **7.8**

BEST CAREER TIPS - 2023

FOR THE ARTISTS

Tanya Venom

"Hydrate the day before you sing, because it takes time for water to be absorbed by your vocal cords. Coughing and constantly clearing your throat can scratch your vocal cords, as well. Try to speak light and gently from the front of your mouth and, by all means, don't sing when you're sick!"

Miranda Lambert

"I love modern music, but I love old music—it's what I gravitate to when I'm listening in my car: old country, old anything. I hope that 30 years from now someone feels that way about my music. I want that nostalgia for people who listen to me. I think I pull from that stuff. It stuck out to me, because it mattered to me."

"Staying true to myself was my best career move. Not compromising my sound or my brand or who I am or anything. That's the reason why my fans connected with me in the first place, they can feel it's very much me, all of it."
- KALI UCHIS

Dead Horse Branding

"Artists and companies need branding to cut through the noise and distinguish themselves."

Loren Israel

"Your audience has to feel understood. It's my story. When I listen, when I sing along, when I see my favorite band, they're singing my song. That's it—that kind of sharing is the root of it."

Joe Bonamassa

"Never compromise. If you know you're good at something—it may not be the hippest thing—be the best damn accordion player in the world! If you're rocking the sousaphone and have that drive and that thing, be the best damn sousaphone player in the world, or at least be the most enthusiastic—and be an entertainer."

"Yes. People think you want the best label with the most well-known artists. But that's not true. You'll get shelved and that doesn't, necessarily, mean you're gonna win. You need somebody to work for you and with you. And that makes you wanna work harder for them."
- DEREK DAY, CLASSLESS ACT

David Porter

"Study what has happened before. Respect what has happened before. Learn from what has happened before. Use what has already proven to work, find what makes you unique and palatable to a larger audience, and then do it."

Rebecca Lovell

"Before and after shows I religiously follow a vocal warm-up and cool-down routine. There's absolutely no reason that a singer shouldn't be experimenting with this aspect of vocal caretaking. I don't drink on tour. And pending how my voice is feeling on any given day, I will limit my talking as well. Prioritizing vocal rest and hydration is always a focus for me."

Florence Dore

"I like to use a thesaurus. I try to write for 10 minutes every morning and do object deep dives to just get you thinking about the world in a real and sensory way. I also think about how to make cool metaphors. Sometimes it may go nowhere or it may just get you thinking about things in a songwriter way.

Milky Chance *Clemens Rehbein*

"Critics and hearing other people's opinions can be helpful sometimes. But also trust yourself."

Kali Uchis

"I think I would definitely work on developing myself more as an artist privately before putting everything on the internet. People develop themselves as artists first. I started performing when I barely had one or two songs out, so I feel like I spent a lot of time working harder instead of smarter."

"The music that was given to me by my family was eclectic and worldly. As I developed my own taste for music, I began with rock & roll. But as I became an adolescent, hip-hop became my language. I learned about a lot of different styles of music by exploring hip-hop samples."
- VIC MENSA

Delacey

"Have hobbies. Have other interests. Do other things that fulfill and inspire you, and you'll write better music."

Megan Moroney

"As an independent artist, the most important thing is to keep the ball rolling; you need to put out good music consistently."

BEST CAREER TIPS - 2023

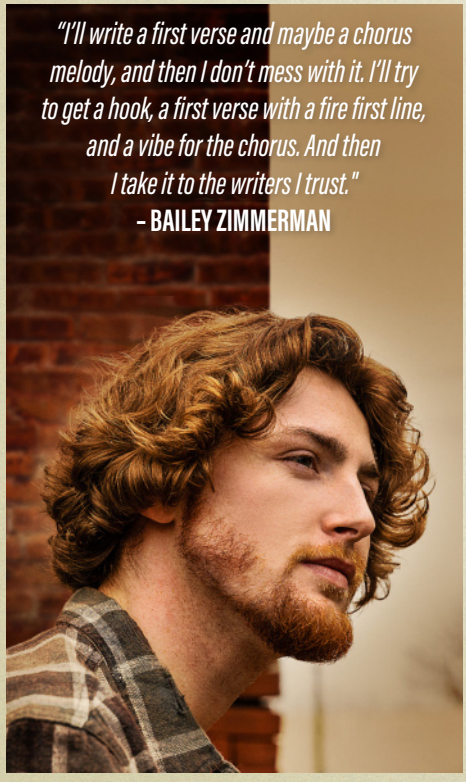
FOR THE COLLABORATORS

Mike Gowen

"From the beginning, I learned that successful PR is about building and nurturing relationships. Once I got to the point where I had all the systems in place and was able to have clients perform on late night TV and appear on prominent magazine covers, I felt my experience and risk tolerance level were at a point where I felt I could launch my own firm."

Classless Act *Franco Gravante*

"It took years to find the right people. We went through a lot of members, as well. But this time it felt right. We're like five brothers in a way. But it's mostly about working, writing and to never stop having a good time. I think that's really important."



Sandro Morales-Santoro

"Fellow composers should be seen as collaborators, not competitors. You can find community in the composing world. They're all going through the same thing you are. Some are further ahead, some are just starting out, but they're all part of a group of people who understand."

Joy Ngiwe

"Remember, it's something you'll work on for a while, so find the project you're passionate about. And make sure you have a good team—I've realized the importance of having a music editor, assistant and additional writers you can count on. They'll be there when the deadlines are coming close."

Judith Sherman

"There are musicians who've recorded regularly and sometimes I have to shake them and say 'Hey, you can be perfect, but I'd rather you be inventive and use your imagination.' Fortunately, that's a skill that can be developed once you learn to trust yourself and the people in the booth."

FOR THE PRODUCERS

Scotty Hills

"What makes a good song is the relentlessness to preserve the vibe that was originally started. If you got hit with some kind of heart dagger or something affected or inspired you to write, then you have a song. The best songs don't try too hard to be much more than that vibe—that thing that a small child that can barely speak should be able to explain—it's your melody."

Rachel White

"Experimentation is key. So many things are happy accidents and even if something dosen't work for a song, you can save it for another time."

Jimmy LaValle

"Being honest about boundaries and the type of composer you are is the best thing you can do and will best serve the project."

Julian Scherle

"When I listen to something, I ask myself, 'Do I have a reaction to this? Does my gut say this music means something?' I think that's where your personality and your unique voice comes in."

Josh Gudwin

"My approach is, and always will be, song first, artist first. I always try to service the song and then the artist to push their vision through, whatever that may be. Our [own] opinions matter, but we're not the ones putting out a song or album. The artist should be the happiest [one] in the process."

Milky Chance *Clemens Rehbein*

We never have anything in mind except the music itself. We're driven by being in the moment. We work intuitively, so whatever comes out, whatever feels right, is what we go for. We never go into the studio and say, 'Maybe we should write a song about this and it should sound like that.' We just see what takes us."

Rachel White

"One of the hardest things to do while you're working is to trust yourself. Sometimes you ask

yourself, 'Does what I'm doing sound good?' Learning how to be less critical in the creation stage is important. You have to accept that the things that have brought you into the room will continue to propel you."

Jason Graves

"You have to remember that technology is a tool you use to realize something you're hearing in your head, and not as a crutch to help you finish something when you're not inspired."

FOR THE MASSES

Holly Knight

"Have some self-worth in order to not be blindsided by stupidity and the patriarchal attitude that still exists. Women who are successful have the chutzpah to just walk in there like they have every reason to be there and are going to show everybody how it's done. If you don't really believe that yet, if you're young and trying to get to that place, fake it 'til you make it."

"It does get a little bit exhausting, the travel, but you just have to put your mindset into the fact that for the next four months we're gonna be living in and out of a suitcase, in a hotel, on a bus, in an airplane—"Alright. Great. It's gonna be fun!"

– ALICE COOPER

Molly-Ann Leikin

"As a writer, it's part of your job to know who publishes the hit songs/artists in your genre each week on the Billboard charts. There is no fairy godmother who will do that for you."

Gemi Taylor

"You don't just pop out the room with a pen in your hand. You have to get hurt. Until you experience things, you can't write about it or make somebody else believe it."

Sandro Morales-Santoro

"It's a marathon, not a sprint. In the beginning, I always felt in a rush, worried about things happening fast enough, but you have to take it one step at a time. You have to network, you have to work on your craft, and then you have to work on your voice, which is what sets you apart from the rest and makes people interested in hiring you over someone else."

Michael Lockwood

"I know from experience that when you're trying to create something, if you go down a path that's already been gone down, that path gets narrower. You have to get outside it, look for a back door to it, and dream up different ways to do the thing you want to get done."

" If you build it, they will come. If you do it the right way, and not try to skip steps, you'll have a long-lasting career."

– JOE BONAMASSA

Julia Bhatt

Live in the moment a bit more—even if you're terrified—because once that [moment is] gone, you're going to regret running away from it."

Clinton Sparks

"The secret of my success is patience, making a plan, and sticking to it. A lot of times, people let a speed bump derail them. But a speed bump doesn't stop you from getting to your destination."

David Porter

"If you know the purpose, you can lose yourself in that purpose, and not lose the authenticity and the credibility of what you're doing."

Barton Stanley David

"Do what you can, with what you have, where you are."

Damon Elliott

"You have to stay persistent and honest with who you are. Never let anything sway you. Sometimes, when you think you just had your big breakthrough, it turns out to just be a stepping stone. But you have to stay persistent."

Rebecca Lovell

"I've fallen onstage, struggled to hear myself or played to the bar staff. Until you've truly hit the ground hard and tested your own mettle, you won't know what you're fully capable of."

Bailey Zimmerman

"If it seems too good to be true, it's probably too good to be true. A lot of people out there are going to blow smoke up your ass. They're going to tell you one thing and mean something else. And they're going to give you the runaround."

"You have to be active in giving people things. Even if it's not your music. Something During the pandemic, for better or worse, once a week I did a reading of a song lyric. It wasn't like we had 10 million people watching it, but it's trying to maintain a connection with people in a non-traditional way. "

– RON MAEL, SPARKS

Rachel White

"It's vital to be calm in stressful situations. People appreciate it when the person steering the ship has an air of calm."

J.W. Roth

"I have always found you will make more money if you let passion drive you than if you let money drive you. It's that simple. I don't care if you're making food or selling tickets or building an entertainment company. If you let passion drive you, you'll win."

Ben Johnson & Track45

"The amateur waits for inspiration to strike; the professional shows up to work and finds it. I think my thing is definitely showing up to work every day and chasing after inspiration, knowing sometimes it might not be there."

Devin Kennedy

"Whether you want to be a songwriter, an artist, a producer, or anything in between, consistency is absolutely crucial." MC

FAVORITE SIGNING STORIES - 2023

COMPLILED BY MARK NARDONE

ISABEL LAROSA JULY

Label: Slumbo Labs / RCA
Type of Music: Pop
Management: Ron Shapiro and Joe Hegleman/ Have Fun Management
Publicity: Amanda Charney, amanda@blackpandapr.com, Amanda Zimmerman/RCA, amanda.zimmerman@sonymusic.com
Web: isabel-larosa.com
A&R: Jake Ottmann

WE LOVE THE TAKEAWAY from this Signing Story in our July issue: Know exactly what you want to sound like and who you want to be.

Isabel LaRosa learned jazz standards from her father at an early age, and older brother Thomas started on guitar. Jamming around Annapolis, MD, the sibling duo first began songwriting while Isabel was in elementary school, with Thomas interning at Slumbo Labs in New York after high school. Moving into an engineering position, Thomas began providing sister Isabel with feedback as she began to

release singles, and all of Isabel's music has been written as a duo (with Thomas doing all the production).

Following three independent releases ("16 Candles," "Closer," and "Game Boy," all in 2021), LaRosa's music started getting attention online, and she was approached about a record deal. She feels that her first RCA single, "Haunted" (from debut EP *I'm Watching You*), was where things "clicked into place," and her music started gaining traction on TikTok. 2022's "I'm Yours" garnered over 150 million streams, with LaRosa sharing that what landed for listeners was "the feeling, and the way the visuals matched that feeling sonically."

Of Jake Ottman, Sr. VP at RCA (and founder of Slumbo Labs), LaRosa says that he really helped her find who she was artistically by advising LaRosa to write about things that mattered to her—and to not just focus on cool lyrics. Ottman is quick to add that LaRosa stood out for him because "she had a vision as a young person, and a clarity that I found really well-formed and beyond her years. She knew exactly what she wanted to sound like and who she wanted to be." ▪

MEGAN MORONEY SEPTEMBER

Label: Sony Music Nashville / Columbia Records
Type of Music: Country
Management: Juli Griffith and Hayley Corbett, contact@punchbowlent.com
Booking: elisa.vazzana@unitedtalent.com
Legal: Judith A. Ricci, judith@jarlaw.net
Publicity: jensen@sweettalkpr.com
Web: meganmoroney.com, instagram.com/megmoroney
A&R: Taylor Lindsey and Julian Swirsky

WE REALLY ADMIRE HOW this savvy artist held off when labels offered her deals, choosing instead to self-release her music and grow her fan base.

When country artist Megan Moroney pulled into Nashville three years ago, the seasoned singer-songwriter arrived with a degree in music business from the University of Georgia in one hand and a completed internship with artist and producer Kristian Bush in the other. Founder and one-half of country duo Sugarland, Bush connected her with manager Juli Newton-Griffith. Moroney released her six-song EP *Pistol Made of Roses* last year and got herself on as many tours. During one of them, her single "Tennessee Orange" dropped and hit big.

"When I moved to Nashville, songwriting was my number-one priority," the artist explains. "I also started to grow my social media. Last summer I released my EP *Pistol Made of Roses* independently so I could have a project out and start touring. I immediately got five label offers. But Spotify also offered to promote my single 'Tennessee Orange' through their Fresh Finds program, so I cut off all record deal talks. I knew that if I got serious with a label, it would take a long time and they'd want me to hold off on releasing my single. I wanted to get it out and then reconvene. As an independent artist, the most important thing is to keep the ball rolling; you need to put out good music consistently.

"Five days after 'Tennessee Orange' was released, it had a million streams," Moroney continues. "Compared to my other numbers, it was pretty significant. It kept blowing up and I had around 20 record deal offers. Over the next two months I got to hand-pick my team and it's been great." ▪

KENTHEMAN SEPTEMBER

Label: Roc Nation
Type of Music: Rap, Hip-Hop
Management: Melissa Keklak, MK Entertainment, instagram.com/melissakeklak_
Booking: Melissa Keklak
Legal: Adam Zia, The Zia Firm, 610-466-8003
Publicity: Sasha Brookner, sashab@heliopr.com
Web: Twitter and instagram.com/imkentheman
A&R: Earl Johnson

HOUSTON RAPPER Ken The Man kicked off her career nine years ago, and for the first four she handled her own affairs. That was until the many songs she'd recorded and uploaded paid off and manager Melissa Keklak discovered her on Instagram. Keklak's nimble navigation

of the industry's often turbulent waters ultimately landed the artist a deal with Jay-Z's Roc Nation. Over the span of her career, KenTheMan has earned more than 50 million streams, 20 million just for her 2022 single "Not My N*gga."

"Melissa found and flew me out to show me how she moves and stuff," KenTheMan recalls of her initial connection. "It was a free shot; she wasn't charging me. She just wanted to show me what she's about. Eventually she connected me with Roc Nation and I came to meet with them in L.A. A little later there was a bigger meeting in New York, so that I could get acquainted with the rest of the team. My lawyer came along and that's when I realized it was serious, but it also gave me more confidence. Their deal was sent about a week later."

But Roc Nation wasn't the first label to talk business. "I'd been offered bad deals before. But Roc Nation made me a good one. It wasn't just what they wanted. They also allowed me to have what I wanted. Things like the fairness, the creativity, deadlines and project amount. There weren't any fights. If a label won't compromise at the beginning, you can imagine how your career is going to go." ▪

FOR YEARS A STAPLE IN MUSIC CONNECTION, our Signing Stories show our readers how other artists have arrived at their deal with a record label, music publisher, or manager. The folks we talk to —artists, managers and A&R reps—give you the ups and down, the do's and don'ts, of getting signed.

YONATAN WATTS APRIL

Publisher: Position Music / Champagne Therapy Music Group (CTMG)
Type of Music: R&B / Pop
Publicity: Deborah Radel @ DR Publication Relations / deborah@drpr.us
Web: positionmusic.com/artist/NjE2NzAwLTJmYzQxYg
A&R: Delmar Powell - Position Music

SONGWRITER-PRODUCER Yonatan Watts has entered a new chapter, signing a global publishing deal in partnership with Position Music and Champagne Therapy Music Group (CTMG). With cuts for Arianna Grade, Black Eyed Peas, Machine Gun Kelly, The Weeknd, and many others, Watts was first inspired by his friends' Japanese manga and anime cartoons. Singing along to the theme songs, he says "the unorthodox music for cartoons would inspire me to find my voice."

A member of a vocal trio as a teen, and finishing Top 100 in *Canadian Idol*, Watts moved to New York where he built his name in as an R&B/Pop engineer (Platinum Sound Studios). Eight years later, he relocated to Los Angeles.

After meeting fellow Canadian Murda

Beatz at an industry event he was asked to create samples for Arianne Grande's project by a colleague of Tommy Brown's and, after a summer in a sketchy downtown apartment, delivered piles of options. Grande's record was cut, but none of Watts' work was included. Four months later, he learned that Grande had circled back and Positions was re-released as a deluxe edition—this time using Watts' tracks on "Main Thing."

Meeting Tommy Brown on multiple occasions, Brown asked Watts to reach out if he found a worthy team to join and, after connecting with Position Music's VP of A&R Delmar Powell through a fellow artist overseas, Watts presented the partnership with Brown. Watts says of Position "They have a different catalog and caliber of people—small, but mighty—and amazing at sync."

Says Delmar of Watts, "Beyond work ethic, when he goes in the room and presses Play, it's a WOW." ▪

PECOS & THE ROOFTOPS JUNE

Label: Warner Records Los Angeles
Band Members: Pecos Hurley, vocals, acoustic guitar; Brandon Jones, rhythm guitar; Zack Foster, lead guitar; Kalen Davis, bass; Garrett Peltier, drums; Hunter Cassell, guitars and keys
Type of Music: Country Rock
Management: Chase Cooper & Jeb Hurt, chase@ floatingleafentertainment.com
Publicity: rick.gershon@warnerrecords.com
Web: pecos-rooftops.com
A&R: miles.gersh@warnerrecords.com

SOMETIMES, YOU'RE NOT yet ready for a label deal . More work needs to be done. It takes discipline and confidence. Perhaps life as a Marine gave Pecos Hurley the qualities necessary for helming a successful act. Formed in Lubbock, TX, Pecos & the Rooftops have been triggering an avalanche of attention on their own terms since 2019, and then Warner began showing interest. The connection happened through their former manager, who

sent some fresh material to Miles Gersh. At the time, the group was especially green. "We weren't ready for a major deal," admits the titular songwriter and vocalist. They certainly hadn't reached their current status of 350 million global streams.

In the interim, other labels started catching on, including Columbia Records. None offered terms that the musicians found acceptable. Warner Records, though, was able to satisfy the band's desires.

Negotiations between the label and the group's team happened without artist input. By the time Hurley and his posse learned of the contract's development, it was already irresistible.

Before signing, the gang visited Warner's Los Angeles headquarters. "The people there were friendly and seemed eager to work with us," observes Hurley. There, the band presented some of their new songs, which received positive reception. Gersh caught their live show.

Hurley held the ultimate power to choose Warner. That said, he made sure his supporting players agreed with his assessment. "I wasn't going to make a decision that the rest of the guys weren't happy with." ▪

JOSIE DUNNE JUNE

Publisher: Prescription Songs
Type of Music: Pop
Management: Anthony Manker and Cooper Anstett, hello@thegroupprojects.co
Booking: katie.germano@caa.com
Legal: Anthony Manker and Cooper Anstett, hello@ thegroupprojects.co
Publicity: Anthony Manker and Cooper Anstett, hello@thegroupprojects.com
Web: josiedunne.com
A&R: Chris Martignago

HAVING ALREADY BEEN SIGNED to Atlantic Records, soul-pop singer Josie Dunne was familiar with Chris Martignago, her A&R rep at the legendary label. Eventually, that deal ran its course, as did Dunne's previous songwriting agreement with Warner Chappell Music, which finished up at the beginning of 2021. Martignago had left for Prescription Songs in 2020.

This confluence of events presented the perfect opportunity for the pair to once again join forces. Martignago took it on his shoulders to sell the rest of the song publisher's deciders on granting a shot to the newly independent artist. With over 100 million streams under her

belt, it wasn't a particularly difficult task.

Dunne knew lots of people at Prescription Songs from her years of co-writing in Music City. "I love Nashville and don't want to leave," she proclaims. "And pop is such a big part of what I do that [Prescription Songs] was the perfect fit."

Additionally, she relishes the musical diversity that Prescription Songs allows her to explore. "I'm getting to write everything," enthuses the singer. "I do a little bit of synch, a little bit of indie rock." Another reason she's content is that the publisher understands the importance of balancing songwriting with pursuing an artist career.

It took about a year for the signing to go from initial mention to dried ink. Trial writing sessions helped Prescription determine she was a solid fit. The fruit of Dunne's efforts is a three-year deal with an option to stay.

Dunne credits much of her success to simply showing up. "Just get in the room and write a lot of songs," she recommends to unsigned writers. "And send them to everybody you know." ▪

Native Instruments Kontrol S-Series MK3

Native Instruments just released the Kontrol S-Series MK3 MIDI Controller, an all-new upgrade to their Komplete Kontrol S-Series MK2 MIDI controllers. Now rebranded as the Kontrol S-Series, the Kontrol S-Series MK3 MIDI controllers are designed around a one-piece unibody design and are available in 49, 61 and 88 key configurations. Other than the 88 Key controllers hammer-action weighted keys, as opposed to the semi-weighted action keybed as will be found in the 49 and 61 variants, the specs on all three Kontrol S-Series MK3 Keyboards are identical. All three keyboards have user configurable velocity and after-touch capability.

The Kontrol S-Series MK3 now has a completely redesigned front panel. Whereas there were two screens on the Komplete Kontrol S-Series MK2, the screen on the Kontrol S-Series MK3 is a single screen and features a completely redesigned screen layout. The brand new 9-inch screen on the Kontrol S-Series MK3 is significantly larger than was found on the Native Instruments MK2 S-Series controllers. The new screen of the S-Series MK3 has an overall larger viewing area and is made of high-resolution glass. The screen is clear, vibrant, exceptionally detailed, and provides for a highly enjoyable and immersive user experience. The eight endless encoder knobs are touch capacitive and provide instant haptic feedback. The eight knobs are continuous rotary encoders and groupable by function to help fine tune your browsing experience. On the Kontrol S-Series MK3, you get four pedal inputs vs two on the Komplete Kontrol S-Series MK2.

All parameters on the Kontrol S-Series MK3 are now accessible via direct integration with Kontakt 7, which means that individual or multiple instances of Kontakt can be open on any track without having to be opened in Komplete Kontrol, as was the case with the Komplete Kontrol S-Series MK2.

Under the hood, the upgraded computer driving the S-Series MK3 is much more powerful than was found on the Kontrol S-Series MK2. Preset browsing on S-Series MK3 is virtually instantaneous, and in most instances loading even large samples available for any installed NKS products takes only a few seconds. Browsing through your available NKS supported libraries (plug-ins) you can browse real-time between banks, key types, sub types, characters and more at "think speed," all of which makes for an enjoyable and immersive user experience. All available browsing controls are now accessible on the front page of the display, which allows the Kontrol S-Series to provide fast real-time editing and instantaneous user feedback. Another benefit of the on-board computer (in addition to quick and snappy preset browsing) is that it allows for more standalone functionality, such as on-board Play Assist, which is currently under development and will be released soon.

Designed in collaboration with Fatar, all three versions of the Kontrol S-Series MK3 now feature polyphonic aftertouch—mono or polyphonic aftertouch is available and is fully user configurable. Polyphonic aftertouch allows you, for example, to hold a key and trigger different sounds and parameters simultaneously.

Adding and layering effects, creating Multi's on the Kontrol S-Series MK3 is easy. As was the case with the Komplete Kontrol S-Series MK2, VST and non NKS plug-ins are available, but may be missing some browsing parameters. You can map the parameters yourself and then save it as a preset, as was the case on the S-Series MK2 Controllers.

In DAW mode, all basic transport controls are available as well as mute, solo, loop metronome on off, tap tempo, undo, and redo functions. The metering in DAW mode on the Kontrol S-Series MK3 is full color, highly accurate and is the best metering display I have ever seen or worked with on any MIDI keyboard controller.

Unlike the Komplete Kontrol S-Series MK2 which was powered by USB-2, the Kontrol S-Series MK3 connects to your computer via USB-C. There are two USB-C ports available. If your computer doesn't have a USB-C port, or can't provide enough power from the port, you will need to use an external USB-C power supply. Because of the increased processing power, the Kontrol S-Series MK3 has much more advanced browsing capability than the Native Instruments Komplete Kontrol S-Series MK2.

Purchasing a Native Instrument S Series MK3 gets you access to Komplete 14 Select, which includes synths, drums, percussion, studio-grade effects, and a wide range of customizable sounds. Stradivari Cello, Hypha, Guitar Rig LE, are included, as well as IZotope Elements Suite, and Ableton Live Lite. Literally hundreds of libraries are available from Native Instruments and third-party developers.

So, if you're the current owner of a Komplete Kontrol S-Series MK2 controller, is it worth the cost to upgrade to a Kontrol S-Series MK3? If the new screen, NKS2 compatibility, and polyphonic aftertouch is important to you, upgrading may be well worth it. On the other hand, direct integration with Native Instruments Machine hardware controller on the Kontrol S-Series MK3 is gone, as well as the dedicated mute, solo buttons and track select buttons found on the Komplete Kontrol S-Series MK2. All these functions are accessible in DAW Mode, albeit with a bit more menu diving and button pushing. The screen on the Komplete Kontrol S-Series MK2, while not as vibrant or large as the screen on the S-Series MK3, is still perfectly serviceable.

Looking ahead, Native Instruments NKS2 will, I'm sure, get more sophisticated and capable over time, and the Kontrol S-Series MK3 is designed to take full advantage of the NKS2 development platform. The Kontrol S-Series MK3 also supports MIDI 2.0. Bottom line, if you're looking to future proof your investment, buying a Kontrol S-Series MK3 keyboard is likely worth the acquisition cost.

At launch, the Kontrol S-Series supports most major DAW's, including Ableton Live, Bitwig, Cubase, Digital Performer, Logic Pro, and Studio One. Integration with FL Studio is coming soon, and Pro Tools support is coming in late 2023. Using the current software and firmware, I found using ProTools (my main DAW) that most transport and browsing functions work correctly, albeit with some functions missing. (That, from my experience, was also the case on the Komplete Kontrol S-Series MK2.)

It took me a while to fully get my head around how capable a MIDI controller the new Kontrol S-Series MK3 controller really is. Bottom line, the Native Instruments Kontrol S-Series MK3 keyboards are as close as any MIDI Keyboard Controller has gotten to integrating full workstation capability into what is arguably one of the most advanced MIDI controllers ever created. An ambitious technical achievement by any measure, the Native Instruments Kontrol S-Series MK3 is certainly one of the most important product releases of 2023 and will likely set the bar for what a MIDI Keyboard Controller is capable of for some time to come.

Prices for the Native Instruments Kontrol S-Series MK3 controllers are MAP $749 for the Kontrol S49, MAP $849 for the Kontrol S61 and MAP $1299 for the Kontrol S88.

Find out more at native-instruments.com/en

Avid MBOX Studio

Avid's MBOX Studio is a professional grade, flexible 21 X 22 audio interface designed to be the centerpiece of your studio workflow. Featuring rugged construction and an innovative design, the Avid MBOX Studio's large console style design is configured so that the input controls are on the left side of the interface and all the output controls on the right. MBOX Studio is relatively heavy and won't easily slide off your desktop. With MBOX Studio, you're getting premium quality AD/DA conversion and the same high-quality preamps found on Avid's Carbon Pre interface which costs three times as much. All of the MBOX Studio controls and buttons are clearly and tastefully backlit and are designed to allow the interface to be effectively used in low lighting conditions. Workflow on the MBOX Studio is centered around two extra-large knobs which are to set input and output levels respectively. Selecting each of the six inputs (Two Combo jacks on the front of the unit, two on the back and two additional line inputs also on the back of MBOX Studio) is done by pressing-whe input knob which toggles though each available channel and which can be selected as mono channels or grouped into even and odd stereo pairs. Avid's MBOX Studio supports not just Pro Tools but supports all major DAW platforms. MBOX Studio's preamps sound clear and punchy and record extremely well.

Also, on the front of MBOX Studio is a Hi Z enabled re-amp output with ground lift and two headphone outputs with individual level controls. Input channels 5 and 6 are quarter-inch jacks. Two sets of send and return loops are provided, and double as additional line inputs for channels 7 and 8 respectively meaning you have up to eight simultaneous analog inputs on tap for tracking Drums, Live Bands, etc. A loopback channel is also available for mixing audio from your computer in with other signals for Podcasting etc. Pressing the Tune button brings up a tuner that can work with just about any instrument. The talkback microphone on the front of the unit allows you to tune your guitar or any other instrument. String names are displayed on the top of the unit. The tuner on MBOX Studiois designed to work with any acoustic instrument. The talkback mic actually doubles as an input source for the tuner.

While the MBOX Studio user interface is intuitive and easy to use, pressing the control app button on the front of MBOX Studio brings up the MBOX Control app and which displays a comprehensive array of controls and settings. Within the MBOX Control app, user configurable routing presets are available so you can call up different preconfigured routing options. There are two headphone outputs on MBOX Studio that are able to mirror the main outputs or have separate mixes. The separate mixes can have up to 8 channels sent from ProTools in addition to each of the physical inputs, Avid's MBOX Studios has onboard DSP enabled effets that are accessible via the MBOX Control app and comprise Reverb, EQ and Delay. The onboard effects are available and configurable so that users can monitor inputs with low latency and effects on each channel.

Four user definable buttons on the front of the unit are available to control user selected functions. The back of MBox Studio has two user configurable footswitch jacks for hooking up momentary or expression pedals, Wah Pedals etc. The available EQ settings in the MBOX Control app Channel focus mode can be routed back to ProTools. Other niceties on Avid's MBox studio include a full monitor section including switchable main and alt outputs asnd which has the ability to normalize the levels for both the main and alt outputs as well as the SPDIF output. separate Bluetooth inputs and outputs to connect wireless earbuds, Bluetooth speakers or connecting phone/tablet for external sources

So, is the MBOX Studio a standout from the already crowded field of audio interfaces currently on the market? From my perspective and for me as guitar player, AVID's MBox studio has some significant features that I have not seen on any other audio interface.

Unlike any other audio interface currently available, Avid's MBOX Studio can set impedance levels on virtually all the available I/O, meaning not only on the four combo jacks switchable between mic, line, and instrument but also the effects loops, footswitch inputs and re-amp output. Further, each of the available impedance settings have "plus capacitor" options adds significant tube feel to your guitar tracks.

Variable Hi Z impedance switching is also great for re-amping and for use on both effects loops, and also as an output to your guitar amps preamp input. While this might at face value does not seem like that big of a big deal, if you're a guitar player and are used to using a DI and plugging effect pedals into your signal chain, MBOX Studio's variable impedance capability will immediately make sonic sense. When correctly configured, Amp Sims inserted into your signal path in ProTools will sound better than a typical Jfet enabled input. The available two mono or one stereo effect Loops variable impedance and switchable High Z capability and the ability to output to your amp via the re-amp output combine to give you a highly flexible path which you can fine tune to your specific musical style.

You can also use the two quarter inch footswitch inputs on the back of MBox Studio to connect volume or expression pedal combined for example with a delay pedal and then play through different guitars and experiment with high and low output of your guitar's pickups. Using ProTools and MBOX Studio's variable impedance capability you can also do things like double a melody line, record a DI Track amp and amp modeler track recording and then playback and re-amp your tracks. MBox Studio's comprehensive impedance switching capability makes it easy to experiment with different guitar pick-ups and craft some great and hpyer realistic sounding guitar tracks on both electric and acoustic guitar. In short, from a Guitar plyers perspective,no other audio interface currently on the market that I know of has this much flexibility.

With the purchase of MBOX Studio, you get a comprehensive selection of plug in,loops and more. You also get a one yearPro Tools Artist Subscription. That's a $299 value included with the hardware, all of which makes purchasing a MBOX Studio a killer deal. After the first year, customers are free to change to any Pro Tools Subscription or Perpetual license

Bottom line, If you're a guitar player and are in the market for an audio interface, Avid's MBOX Studio's built in effects, comprehensive re-amping functionality, variable impedance enabled inputs , and flexible routing not to mention end to end pro level specifcations make it a solid choice and well worth checking out.

AVID MBOX Studio is available now for MAP $899. Find out more at avid.com/products/mbox-studio

Cannons

Heartbeat Highway

Columbia Records

Producers: Cannons and Jason Evigan

8

Neon highways and cotton candy fever dreams are the bread and butter of this rising electropop outfit. The theme continues with their fourth full-length recording, on which the quirky songsmiths stun listeners and radio programmers alike, lead single "Loving You" topping alternative radio and quickening pulses. Although the album's subject matter never strays from matters of love, this quality suits Heartbeat Highway––Cannons' thumping-yet-ethereal arrangements and the rollercoaster ride of romance both trigger a similar rush of endorphins. **– *Andy Kaufmann***

Dying Wish

Symptoms of Survival

Sharptone Records

Producer: Randy LeBoeuf

8

Portland's Dying Wish get heavier—while also more vulnerable—with their second full-length. At times there's an intentionality behind multiple rhythm guitars competing for your headbanging attention ("Symptoms of Survival"), while other tracks slip into the metal-core melodies we're accustomed to. My only complaint is the track order: most of the catchiest bangers on the album are placed on the back half. Either way, these new songs are going to punch you square in the teeth before inviting you to two-step. **– *Andy Mesecher***

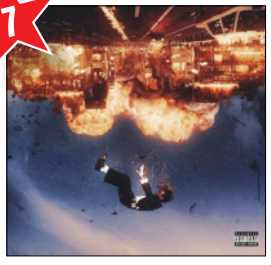
Offset

Set It Off

Motown

Producers: Various

7



No longer a Migo, Offset searches for the right sound on his second studio album. Now in his early 30s, Offset appears to be optimistic, with a drive to prove that he can stand on his own, beyond Migos and Cardi B. With the recent death of his friend/former bandmate Takeoff to beefing with haters, Offset appears to be struggling with where his current path may lead him. *Set It Off* is rather intermittent and entertaining; but I'm not quite sure if Offset realizes that he may never experience artistic greatness again. **– *Adam Seyum***

PinkPantheress

Heaven Knows

Warner UK

Producers: PinkPantheress and Mura Masa

7

Following the chart-topping viral success of "Boy's a Liar Pt. 2" with Ice Spice, British singer-songwriter PinkPantheress' long-awaited debut studio album Heaven Knows is a triumphant progression of her signature dynamic downtempo and hyperpop sound. Her sweet whispery vocals carry strong through addictive choruses and atmospheric bass production. Highlights include the playfully addictive tune "The aisle," the harp-driven Shakespearean track "Ophelia" and the melodic R&B choruses of "Feel complete." **– *Jacqueline Naranjo***

Sacha Mullin

Casino Wilderness Period

Dog & Pony/Dipterid Records

Producer: Todd Rittmann

9

Singer-songwriter Mullin defies description on many levels. He's pop, but not in a strict hip-hop sense. He's jazz, but not in a traditional be bop manner. And he's R&B, but extends beyond that parameter, as well. He kind of embodies all of these idioms and maybe adds a few more to his trick bag. One thing is certain, Mullin sings like an angel, with a range that can shift from falsetto to otherworldly in a heartbeat. And the songs are cinematic, captivating and arrestingly dynamic. **– *Eric Harabadian***

Sonny & The7eventh Time

Sonny & The7eventh Time

Emory Music Group

Producer: Sonny Emory

8

Legendary for his work with Earth, Wind & Fire and pop and jazz legends (J Lo, Eric Clapton, Stanley Clarke), drummer Sonny Emory's soul/funk/rock ensemble showcases his eclectic artistry in collaboration with bass great Sam Sims and Emory's talented sons Nic Gibran on vocals/keys and engineer Ni Emory, who adds his prowess at the mic. Though most songs are written or co-penned by Emory, he chooses a very offbeat "cover" obscurity—"Eminence Front" from The Who—to get the party rolling. **– *Jonathan Widran***

The Kinks

The Journey: Part 2

BMG

Producers: Various

9

The Kinks compilation *The Journey: Part 1* was released back in March of this year and, for the most part, that's the "greatest hits" album. That's the one with "You Really Got Me" and "All Day and All of the Night" on it. *Part 2* is arguably more interesting, though, because it's packed with deep cuts, b-sides and oddities that are all of immense interest to Kinks-heads. The new mixes are crystal clear, and we're offered a reminder that the Kinks were way more than a "singles" band. **- *Brett Callwood***

The OddEven

Darkness

Eclipse Records

Producers: Weed, E.T. and Frank Marchand

8

Call it post-grunge, modern alt-metal, stoner rock or whatever tag you choose, the bottom line is, this band can jam! Their method is not mere rabble rousing, but gut-wrenching and emotionally invested songs. A Skin Yard/Jack Endino vibe blended with minor sci-fi and prog elements, hits you like a ton of bricks. The production is huge, with enveloping, atmospheric guitars that are heavy, yet melodic. And Chris Volz's vocals are trance-like, articulate and compelling. It's a cut above the fray. **– *Eric Harabadian***

To be considered for review in the Album Reviews section, you must have a record deal with a major label or an independent label with an established distributor. If you do not, please see our New Music Critiques section.

DREW HOLCOMB

PIERCE BROCHETTI

The Greek Theater *Los Angeles, CA*

Web: drewholcomb.com
Contact: danielle@stuntcompany.com
Players: Drew Holcomb, guitar, vocals; Rich Brinsfield, bass; Nathan Duggar, guitar; Jonathon Wamble, drums

Material: Drew Holcomb is a country singer hailing from Memphis, TN who's crooning country tunes to his audience's content. The songs are very country. Just shy of rock & roll, on one end, and just shy of traditional country on the other. Holcomb brings out the best in his band as he sits nicely in themiddle watching and listening to his audience soak up all of his lyrics; and even sing along to a few of the tunes, too.

Musicianship: What can you say about Drew Holcomb and The Neighbors except that they sounded tight. Great musicianship encompassed Holcomb on all the tunes as these top-notch players had their way with the audience. Brinsfield and Wamble were on point as the rhythm section held the bottom end ever so groovily. Duggar added sweetness to the mix, as he doubled on guitar and pedal-steel guitar and was outstanding throughout the evening.

Performance: Excellent. Drew came out swinging from the get-go and didn't let up all night. The band had the audience dancing in the aisles and singing along to "Dancing with Everybody" and All the Money." Drew and the Neighbors played flawlessly to 6,000 plus fans and had them all eating out of his hand by the time the set was over.

Summary: Drew Holcomb and The Neighbors have been making music for the better part of 20 years and are still going strong. The ballads, "Song of Gratitude" and "What Would I do Without You," sum up what's been in Holcomb's heart this whole time—gratitude and love. Their very first No. 1 hit, "Find Your People," from the Strangers No More album, shook the charts in 2023 and the band hit the road in support of the record. If you're a country music fan (and even if you're not), Drew Holcomb is worth checking out! – ***Pierce Brochetti***

JOHN BEASLEY & MONK'ESTRA

BOB BARRY

Zipper Hall *Los Angeles, CA*

Contact: Lorna Chiu, lorna@johnbeasleymusic.com
Web: johnbeasleymusic.com
Players: John Beasley, conductor-arranger-piano; Brian Swartz, Kye Palmer, Brandyn Phillips, Brendan Laronga, trumpets; Lasim Richards, Wendell Kelly, Ryan Dragon, Lemar Guillary, trombones; Bob Sheppard, Danny Janklow, Tom Luer, Kirsten Edkins, Tom Peterson, woodwinds; Reuben Rogers, bass; Terreon Gully, drums

Material: Introduced by incomparable jazz patron and founder of host Jazz Bakery, nonagenarian Ruth Price, John Beasley and the MONK'estra band shared their jazz stylings for over 90 minutes. In celebration of Beasley's birthday, the anniversary of the birth of Thelonius Monk, and MONK'estra's tenth anniversary, the group performed a collection of Monk arrangements, a Charlie Parker cover, and a handful of originals, enthralling the packed room of enthusiasts with their tight big band sound.

Musicianship: "I Mean You" opened with Beasley on the grand piano alongside a growling tenor sax solo, followed by synthesized keys on "Locomotive," adding on a warm saxophone solo, great drum tempo pull, and overall moodiness. Charlie Parker's "Donna Lee" (Beasley's arrangement won 2021's Best Arrangement, Instrumental GRAMMY) added more sax section magic, intermittent tight band shots, great upright bass saunter, and fabulous stylistic transitions—in particular from the trumpet section. "Ruby, My Dear" included guest musician Ralph Ward in a beautiful sax solo, and closely harmonized trombone layering and slide sections.

Performance: A medley of "Let Them All Talk" (from Steven Soderbergh's film, composed by Thomas Newman and arranged and orchestrated by Beasley) brought a gorgeous sway and suspenseful feel, delicious walking bass line underpinning, and a muted trumpet sound, for a blend that presented the epitome of musical escapism.

Monk's "Oska T" revealed a stunning bass/drumkit/piano section, soprano sax solo, fantastic drum fills and band shots for a true Old Hollywood sound. The stage was a who's who of jazz players from around the Los Angeles area, and the evening included guest heavyweights Ralph Ward, Hubert Laws, and Greg Phillinganes.

Summary: The "Rhythm-A-Ning/Evidence" mashup shared an intense drum solo and two tenor saxes trading eight, then four, then two bar solos. Between interspersed solo embellishments, instrumental growling, punchy horn shots, and dreamy soprano sax interludes, juxtaposed with full band syncopation, spontaneous on-stage cameos, and audience finger-snapping, Beasley and MONK'estra delivered a delicious combination of polished sound and improvised celebration. – ***Andrea Beenham***

The Viper Room *W. Hollywood, CA*

Web: xaviermillerofficial.com
Contact: xaviermillermusic@gmail.com
Players: Xavier Miller, guitar, vocals; Duke, bass; Danny Palmer, drums

Material: Xavier Miller is "Good ol' Rock & Roll" music. The tunes are a little rough, but they are straightforward, sometimes in-your-face ,and sometimes subtle and elusive. Most are hard driving, like the fan favorite, "Home," and "Love Ain't Nothin'." Xavier cannot be pinned down to "sound" like anyone. He is unique, has a style all his own. Although "3 Days Gone" has an AC/DC-ish intro that caught the audience's attention, the rest of his repertoire is inimitable.

Musicianship: The musicianship is extremely good. Duke comes from a long history of playing with some well-known acts, including Rose Royce, (and had a hand in writing the big hit "Car Wash"), B.B. King and now, Xavier Miller. His bass playing added another level to the already rich lineup, which he kindly showed off on "Watch it Go Pop" and "Love Ain't Nothin'." Palmer is another big hitter who joined Duke in Rose Royce and has played with many well-known acts.

Performance: Miller was on fire, feeding off the crowd's frenzy. He was dancing and grooving to all the tunes, regardless of the situation. There were some technical difficulties on the first tune, but he waved it off and moved forward, and that set the pace for the rest of the evening. Duke was on point from the get-go, as well as Palmer, and together they put out a respectable show.

Summary: Xavier Miller is a solid musical act who still has a few tricks up his sleeve. He pulled out a solid guitar solo on "There I Was" that might have blistered his fretboard. Good solid rock & roll all around with some radio-worthy tunes waiting to be heard, like the pretty "Rain" and the ballad "Little Darling." Animated, unique and with very good vocals, Miller has it going on.

– Pierce Brochetti

The Echo *Los Angeles, CA*

Contact: Shane Graham supergloomband@gmail.com
Web: supergl00m.bandcamp.com
Players: Shane Graham, drums; Betrand Vellky, guitar and vocals; Peter Doherty, keys and vocals; Ethan Walden, bass; Drew Aron, guitar and vocals

Material: Celebrating the release of their EP, *Immaterial*, supergloom (sic) took The Echo by storm with their unique blend of psych rock, fusing elements of prog and alternative rock to create a lysergic, kaleidoscopic experience of hooks and grooves. The band elevated the recordings to another level during their live performance. "Old Friend" packed a punch, driven by bassist Ethan Walden and drummer Shane Graham. The synth-laden "Cycles" hypnotized the crowd, with haunting vocals soaring over the swimming texture of guitars.

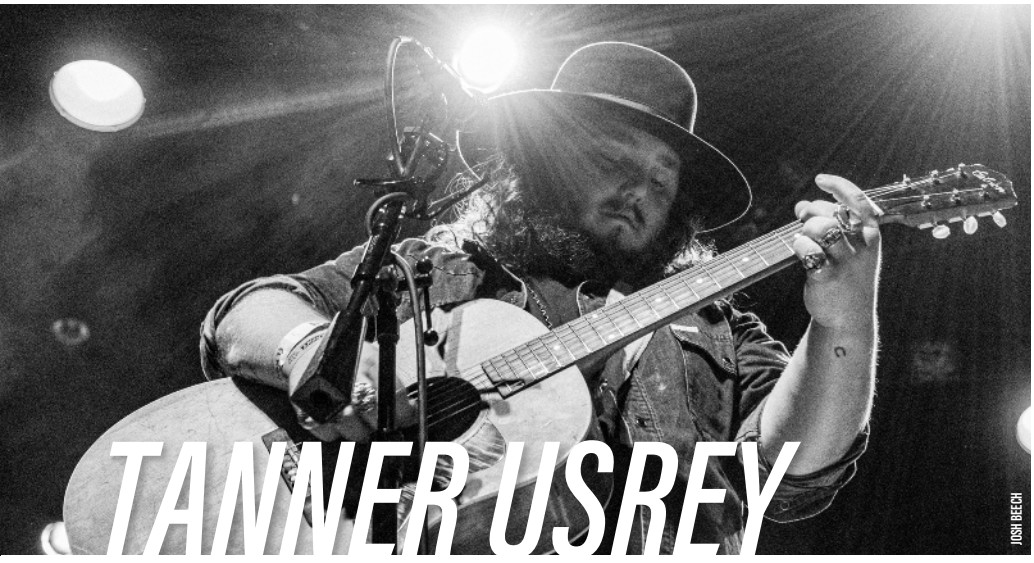
Musicianship: Masterful musicians, every link in supergloom is strong. Graham and Walden weave catchy, danceable grooves, shifting naturally through odd time signatures and polyrhythms to make the whole band's sound accessible. As guitarists Betrand Vellky and Drew Aron lay the foundations for their wall of sound, keyboardist Peter Doherty paints pastel soundscapes to complete the spell.

Vocally, the group shares lead vocal duties across the whole set. Each song plays to that singers' strength, creating an engaging and cohesive sound. Drew Aron's and Betrand Vellky's vocals mesmerize over a shoegazy foundation in "Glass Ajar", spiced with jazzy influences. Keyboardist Peter Doherty brings a soaring, Muse-like influence to the more epic numbers and did a stunning performance on their closing tune, "EONA."

Performance: The Echo is an excellent venue for this band. Immersed in live projections, the overall performance was well thought out and professional. Frequently bombastic, occasionally introspective, they took the audience on a journey through time and space. From their opening number, "Cut the Ties," the band set the tone with high energy, lush tunes that got the audience moving. Each track follows a journey of its own, shifting through sections with builds and drops, always keeping the listener engaged. Singer-guitarist Drew Aron takes the band to its most intimate moment at the start of "Glass Ajar" and then quickly vamps the energy right back up to 11 on the chorus.

Summary: This band's stellar recordings are even better live. The experience becomes larger than even the band itself, with a captivated audience swaying to the collective consciousness of the sound and vision. These guys are definitely a band to watch.

– Ian Stahl



El Rey Theatre *Los Angeles, CA*

Contact: Jessica.Nall@atlanticrecords.com
Web: site.tannerusreymusic.com

Material: Opening with his trademark gravelly country sound and gorgeous vocal timbre, Tanner Usrey played to an excited, happy crowd in a 30-minute set in Los Angeles (opening for Ian Munsick). "Come Back Down" brought a warm, vocal feel to ease into the set, with "Til The Morning Light" bringing punchier vocals and lyrics (including the line "You're trouble with a Bible verse tattoo. I know you read about me and you know that I'm bad news"), stronger projection, beautiful bluesy melismas, and some more upbeat strumming.

Musicianship: A down-to-earth demeanor made for an easy-to-invest-in show. Usrey has the songwriting goods, and a straightforward approach to the guitar, while bringing a unique vocal sound and feel to his singing, with a gentle country vibrato and great breath control. Melodic new ballad, "Who I am" shared great octave leaps and storytelling with lyrics, "self-destruction at best" and "do you like the way I make you feel...or just the way I sing?" Syrupy ballad, "Last Goodbye" added melancholy, while "Josephine" revealed fuller, rounder vocal tone and invitational storytelling with lyrics, "her veins they look like tracks all across her skin; she used to be an angel, but she traded that for sin."

Performance: Having garnered millions of streams on Spotify following the release of 2019's *Medicine Man* ("Come Back Down" and "Beautiful Lies" have reached almost 20 million streams each), 2021 brought the release of the *SÕL Sessions* EP (with "The Light" added to the Season 4 finale of *Yellowstone*). Usrey's raw songwriting and lowkey, approachable attitude create a fun, engaging show atmosphere.

Summary: Show closer "Beautiful Lies" added lovely phrasing and control, highlighted with a long-held, emphatic vibrato note. Delivering relatable, transparent lyrics, like "Oh, I won't beg you to stay, I guess you wouldn't anyway. ... I know you're leaving, walking out that door, and I can see the heartbreak in your eyes," he subtly commands attention from the audience. Between tales of heartbreak and addiction, deception, love, lust, loss, and redemption, Usrey's vocals are gritty and soulful, and he is refreshingly direct in his lyrics and presence.

– ***Andrea Beenham***

Nublu *New York, NY*

Contact: fiona@thebloomeffect.com
Web: waterseedmusic.com
Players: Lou Hill, founder, bandleader, composer, drummer; Rahim Glaspy, vocals; Ten, vocals; Jentleman Sharp, keyboards, vocals; Grant Hudson, guitar; Willie Martin, bass; Robert Ramson, sax; Cinese Love, flute; Greg Banks, Flagboy Giz, special guests

Material: It was all about New Orleans at Nublu's on New York City's Lower East Side. This energetic mashup of R&B, funk, and jazz, is reminiscent of acts like Rick James, Earth, Wind & Fire, and Sly And The Family Stone. Dubbed "Future Funk," Water Seed is currently spreading Nola culture throughout the world, working with the Mayor's Office of New Orleans and the NOLA Office of Cultural Economy. The material is uplifting, life-affirming and flat out danceable, characterized by tight grooves and notable theatrics. "Open Sesame," encourages us to reach out and grab that brass ring because tonight is your night: *Don't you be afraid to be/ all the things that you want to be/close your eyes and count to three/open sesame*. Slowing down the pace is the more R&B sultry love ballad "Rest Of My Life." *You're the one I finally found/ the one I'm looking for/...I'll do the time/I'll be with you the rest of my life.*

Musicianship: The various grooves and continuous high energy the band maintains keeps the crowd thoroughly engaged. Hill sets the tone while offering a few tasty drum solos. Other band members also have their own solo moments while Glaspy, Ten, and Love, the three fronting band members, keep the focus on vocals and staging.

Performance: The band mixes it up by trading off lead singers and adding choreographed moves, matching the music note for note. To further drive home the New Orleans flavor, special guest Flagboy Giz, dressed in authentic full Mardi Gras Indian regalia, performed three indigenous numbers.

Summary: Water Seed are true collaborators. They work well off each other while taking full advantage of their individual time in the spotlight. They have charted on Billboard and recently released a new EP entitled *Sounds Of The Wasteland.* **- *Ellen Woloshin***

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– J. MICHAEL DOLAN

Partnering With The Future

21 Ways AI Can Elevate Your Music Career

In an era where technology continues to reshape the creative landscape, the fusion of artificial intelligence and creativity is yielding transformative possibilities for musicians worldwide. From marketing, to composing, to revolutionizing production, to audience engagement, AI is emerging as an indispensable "personal assistant" for artists seeking to update their toolkit, while they upgrade their mindset. This is important because a smart conversation about AI being your enemy cannot be complete without including AI as your partner!

That said, here's a list of 21 suggestions that scratches the surface of what is possible when you mix human talent and creativity with artificial intelligence:

1. Songwriting, Composition and Arrangement

- Unlimited AI-generated ideas for original music compositions and melodies.
- Assistance in creating complex musical arrangements.
- Assistance in exploring new harmonies and chord progressions.
- AI-generated ideas and suggestions for rhymes, lyrics, phrases, and song titles.

2. Real-time Collaboration

- Real-time AI-powered collaboration tools for remote songwriting.
- Live, AI-powered collaborative sessions with fellow musicians.
- AI generated musical ideas and suggestions to inspire collaborators.

3. Instrument Recommendation

- AI suggestions for adding new or different instruments to your music based on your style and preferences.

4. Sheet Music Generation

- AI transcription of music to scores, and songs to sheet music.

5. Audio Fingerprinting and Copyright Infringement

- AI-powered tools can identify unauthorized use of your music across all platforms.

6. Royalty Tracking

- Automating royalty calculations and distribution.

7. Music Production

- AI-automated mixing and mastering processes.
- Intelligent audio enhancement.
- Real-time audio processing for live performances.

8. Remixing and Mashups

- AI-assisted remixing of existing tracks.
- Creative mashup suggestions using AI analysis.

9. Music Video Creation

- AI-assisted video editing and effects.
- Automatic scene detection and synchronization.

10. Performance Improvement

- AI real-time performance feedback and coaching.
- Virtual rehearsal accompaniment.

11. Virtual Concerts and Events

- AI-generated visual effects for live performances.
- Virtual reality experiences for remote fans.

12. Audio Sampling and Remixing

- AI-generated audio samples and loops.
- Automating the process of sample clearance.

13. Adaptive Set lists

- AI-assisted creation of dynamic set lists that suit your audience's preferences, gender, age, and energy levels.

14. Music Marketing

- AI-generated ad copy and marketing content.
- Social media post scheduling and optimization.
- AI lists of venues and contacts.

15. Market Analysis

- Predicting trends and popular genres using AI analytics.
- Identifying target audience preferences.
- Analyzing streaming and download data to optimize marketing strategies.

16. Fan Engagement

- AI-driven chatbots for personalized interactions with fans.
- Analyzing social media data to understand fan sentiment.
- Identifying fan demographics for targeted promotions.

17. Tour Planning

- AI-compiled lists of where to play (whether it's in town or cross country), route optimization, scheduling gigs and planning tours.

18. A&R (Artists and Repertoire)

- Identifying promising emerging artists through AI analysis.
- Predicting potential hits based on trends, patterns, seasons, and timing.

19. Contacts, Companies & Services

- AI generated lists of artists, companies, venues, studios, services, etc. in any city, town, village, or country in the world.

20. Vocal Coaching

- AI-driven vocal analysis and feedback to improve singing technique.

21. Music Education

- AI-driven adaptive learning platforms catering to individual skill levels.

Once again, this list only scratches the surface of what is possible when you mix human talent and creativity with artificial intelligence.

J. MICHAEL DOLAN is the founder and former CEO of *Music Connection* magazine. He is also a best-selling author, beloved blogger, and private consultant to artists and entrepreneurs. He can be reached at: www.jmichaeldolan.com

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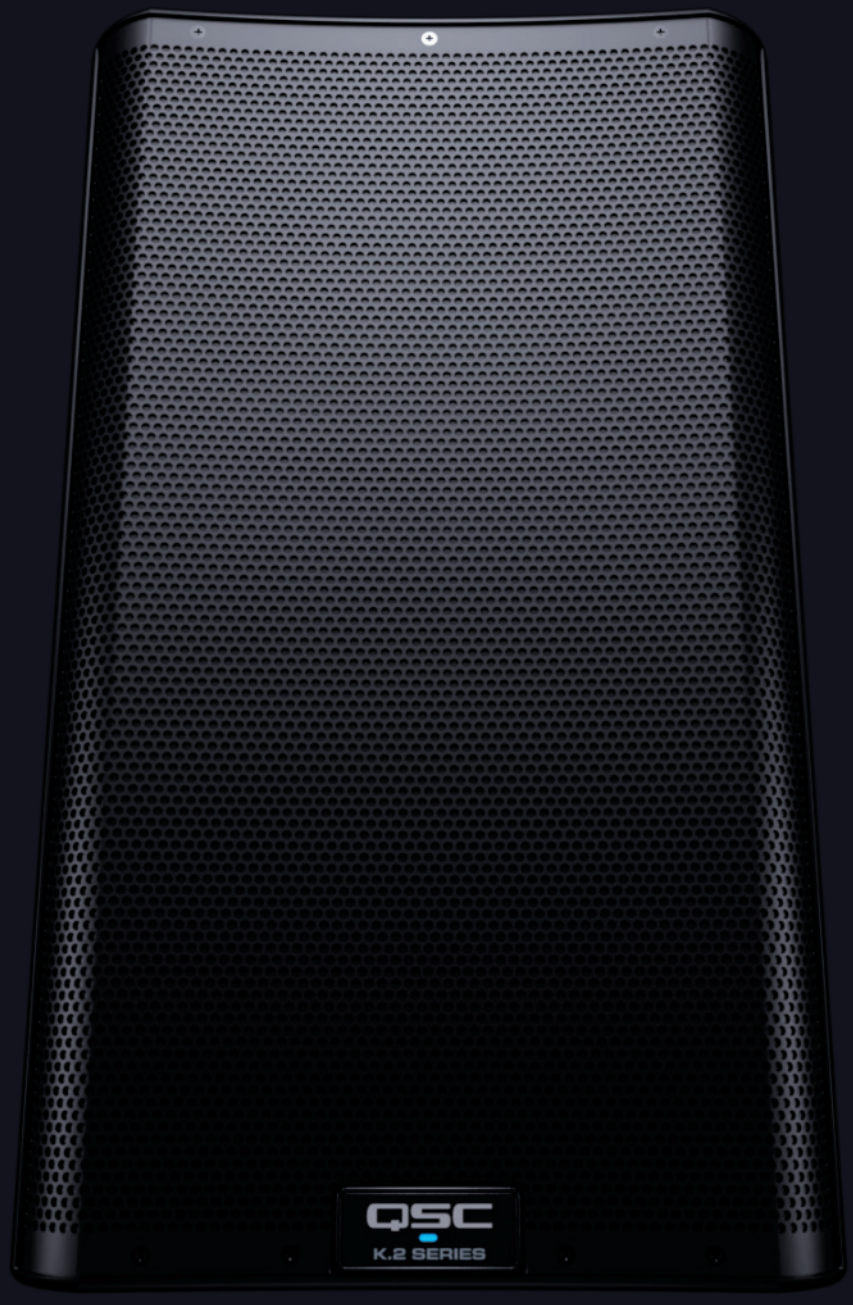

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